

IN A
VENETIAN GARDEN
AND
ST. URSULA



AMY REDPATH RODDICK

PAR CODE IN BACK OF BOOK

812

R L S L in

812

R 686 in



PRESENTED BY

Estate late Lady Drummond

74011

1946

October.
1926

IN A VENETIAN GARDEN

ST. URSULA

For Julia, TWO PLAYS
BY
with AMY REDPATH RODDICK *'s love.*

AUTHOR OF

"The Flag and Other Poems"

"The Armistice and Other Poems"

"The Seekers, an Indian Mystery Play"

"The Birth of Montreal, A Chronicle Play
and Other Poems"

"The Romance of a Princess, A Comedy,
and Other Poems"

(All Rights Reserved)

MONTREAL
JOHN DOUGALL & SON
1926

IN A VENETIAN GARDEN

CHARACTERS.

Massaccio,	<i>A Peasant,</i> <i>who has been a strolling Player</i>
Fina,	<i>A Waiting-Maid.</i>
Vitalis,	<i>A Count.</i>
Paulina,	<i>His Wife.</i>
Marco,	<i>His Friend.</i>
A Monkey,	
Giovanni, }	<i>Lackeys.</i>
Bernardo, }	
Antenello,	<i>A Goldsmith.</i>
Niccolo,	<i>His Apprentice.</i>
Doge,	<i>The Doge of Venice.</i>
Moro,	<i>Chief Councillor.</i>
Councillors, Guests, Attendants.	

IN THE MASQUE

Spirit of Venice,	
Antenor,	<i>Sage of Troy.</i>
St. Mark,	
Wavelets,	<i>Sea Nymphs.</i>
Storm-Waves,	<i>Harpies.</i>

Suggestion: A tale in the Gesta Romanorum.

IN A VENETIAN GARDEN.

Scene.—A stately garden, with cypress and palm trees bordering the stone wall, that runs along the back of the stage. This is interrupted, near the left, by a wrought iron gate that opens on a tradesman's lane. At the left are balustraded steps belonging to a palace that fronts on the Grand Canal. There is a door beneath leading to kitchen quarters. On the right are preparations for a masque. Cushioned benches and chairs, with footstools and Oriental rugs, are placed just where they should be for the convenience of guests.

Some merry whistling notes are heard. Enter *Massaccio* behind the gate. He sings while trying to force it open.

Most merrily, merrily wakes the day;
But then the night comes after.
Now join our hands in golden play
And circle round with laughter.

[The gate suddenly gives way.]

So ho! the latch has slipped: what follows then?

[*Massaccio* enters the garden and looks round, then makes the cooing sound of a dove; but rather shriller. After a pause he repeats the call. He is hidden from the house by a tree. Enter *Fina*, left, through the lower door. She

peers about. The sound comes again. She starts, then recognizing Massaccio, she holds up her hand as though to ward him off.]

Fina. Thy silence now. Why hast thou come? Must I Say "No," these thousand times? No, no! again: No, no!

Massaccio. But "yes" I say, a yes that is strong
With reason's voice, that swears with lordly folk;
A yes, whose like thy wildest thought has failed
To compass; though whetted oft by beauty's proud
Possession. Alas! that burnished mirror, bought
To please on thy Saint's day; what demon tempted?
A small affair; but large enough to sow
Ambition's seed, to teach my playmate's heart
That trade was better worth than love; and so
She comes to this old trading town, to barter
Rosy cheeks for sallow gold; to search
A husband 'mongst the gilded great; maybe
A flunkey, nimble fingered, who taps, cajoles
His sottish lord; maybe a master-workman,
Who imitates the flowery gems that wood
And pasture freely strew; maybe—but why
Prolong? when none can love as I. [*Approaching her.*]

Fina.

Thy distance,

Friend! Thou hast but honeyed words to woo,
Sweet words, that hold as little worth as flowers
Or woodland fruit or odds and ends of favours
Thy flattened purse affords. I will admit
That looking-glass deserved a kind response;
Twelve kisses thou didst ask and honestly
I paid; twelve honest kisses—another then;
As bakers count. [*Kissing him.*] Is it good?

Massaccio.

Fina, dear!

But listen then, but listen; no longer am I
Poor Massaccio, silly fellow, dreamer,
Dawdler, out at elbows, out of wits,
Lazy loafer, wastrel, dotard, what
Thou wilt! the many slurring names that those
Who slave for gold, delight to shower on one,
That plucks his gold from bush and briar, that drinks
From Nature's source.

Fina.

And so thy tongue goes wagging.

Words! words! unless perchance a rolling stone
Has ploughed beneath where treasures lurk; if such
Good hap is truly thine, I have still—nay not
A kiss; nor pleasantry; but some few seconds.
Speak on!

Massaccio.

To shorten then my story's length:

This garden's statuary, its bloom, the earth
Thou treadest upon; that many-windowed palace,
Glittering its wealth; the counterpanes
Of taffeta; the gilded vases; the lamps
Aglow; the crimson damask draperies;
The foreign riches stored in cellar-vault;
The lavishment above; all, all are mine,
And thine, if thou but sayest the word.

Fina.

Words! words!

More wild than ever!

Massaccio.

Nay, I find them tame

And colourless to tell of fortune's favour.
They should come tumbling, lost in rainbowed froth,
Or dipped in bright Venetian dye; or mouthing,
As those that some great captain bellows forth;
Who loves his leadership and bows to none.
Yet truly, this gracious gift is one I'd spurn,

Could I but reach thee otherwise. Ah well,
 The die is cast. So be! now listen, Fina.
 Listen well. Lend me some coins to hire
 Befitting dress, a chain, a gondola;
 I wish to come in state, make proper entrance
 Up the water-steps, demand my right
 Before the fronting portico.

Fina.

How now!

Thou ownest the palace yonder, yet dost whine
 For coin like any poor petitioner;
 Well, well, the jester's cap and bells lie fallow.
 Death hushed his jokes but yesternight, and none
 To fill the vacancy. Thou might'st apply.
 We entertain the Doge and Councillors;
 His loss is much deplored.

Massaccio.

So may it be.

An end to folly's tongue! Give me the purse
 That is stowed within thy kerchief's fold. My words
 Are serious.

Fina.

And mine reciprocate.

Go soothe thyself with forest green; leave me
 And towns alone.

Massaccio. But Fina, I will explain.

I tailed my tale too suddenly, it has
 A body's length and headed thus: Two weeks
 Ago——

Fina.

Or more, or less, what signifies?

I have no heart to listen, nor time to fritter.

Massaccio [Imploringly.] Fina!

Fina. [Extracting her purse.] See here, Massaccio, these
 denari.

Enough to hire a gondola, though scarce
 For brave attire. Now haste away; return
 In state to press thy claim.—The Grand Canal
 Has waters deep, unshriven men have slipped
 Ere this. Poor fool! Another fool has passed
 From moist to dry and I have none to give,
 No tears to shed. O take advice! go tease
 The savage boar, play somersaults with rough,
 Unmannered bears; but leave my master's home,
 Himself, he is more tigerish, more fierce
 Than they.

Massaccio. Do I then catch some gleams of love,
 The faint, sweet watchfulness? or vexed desire
 To rid thyself? as thou might'st flip aside
 A sticky, buzzing fly. It matters not.
 These jingling coins have friendship such, they'll urge
 A soft inviting from eyes askance. Ay beauty,
 That snaps at glitter, is't worth the hunter's task?
 I question not—I question not. Farewell,
 My Fina, a quilted nest awaits that is rimmed
 With gold. [*Exit through gate.*]

Fina. Gold! gold! I love its sound; but he
 Has gone and visions too.—How now, who comes?

[*Enter left, descending the steps, Vitalis and Paulina, both gorgeously dressed. As they walk across the garden, Fina flits behind the trees.*]

Vitalis. A breath of air! a most vexatious day—
 Paulina, there is a maid who flies detection.
 So let her go! 'twill save a lying response.
 I tire of truth that is minced and dished with sauce
 Or lost in stammering and reddened cheek.
 There is no honest service, no loyalty
 As in our fathers' day.

[*Exit Fina through kitchen door.*]

Paulina.
So shortly since. Two weeks ago——

Or as it was

Vitalis. The world
Has changed, not I; and now this foolish feast.
Who wants the Doge and Councillors? not I.
A poor affair, a shiftless retinue;
Our hospitality's grim lack will set
Tongues wagging. Yet I care not, will let things take
Their froward course, exert myself no further.
[*He throws himself on a bench that is near a thickly foli-
aged tree not far from the gate.*]

Paulina. [*Sitting beside him.*] If magpie gossip spies on
us, why then
She'll leave our friends alone and thus undoing,
We do a kindly deed.

Vitalis. Friends, friends! kind deeds!
I know them not.

Paulina. Then let me act as might
A life companion, your best beloved; or as,
We'll say, an English wife; who dares to counsel;
Who is a mate and not a plaything, a poor
Venetian doll.

Vitalis. And so Paulina sobs
Her discontent; Paulina, who fears no rival;
Her husband's heart unmoved by slave enchanter,
By harem favourite. She occupies
Alone, and yet complains, ah me! what next?
The world is askew.

Paulina. Then give the chance to straighten,
A woman's right! Unlock the sanctum closed,
Confide in me. Let us concert, thereby

A dormant force will waken. I have the wish;
But knowledge lacks. Two weeks ago, the world
Went smooth enough. Tell me what happened then,
To so reverse its keel?

Vitalis.

Why nothing, unless

A smouldering fire shot sudden flame, a quiet
Uneasiness slipped from its trace. Paulina,
Listen: Venice and I are far apart
As still lagoon from restive waves without;
As smiling shallows from ocean's wolfish fangs.
Wolfish! what say I? Forget the word.
Can will not free from goading memory?
Paulina, steal forth with me, learn foreign ways.
Let us climb lofty peaks or find asylum
In fruitful vales—nay, they breathe of dank,
Are walled around with mire.

Paulina.

Vitalis! You rave.

A madness creeps—a vile distemper. Your brow
Is passing hot! [*Feeling it.*] Why no! you suffer though!

Vitalis. A weariness. I am tired of Venice.

Paulina.

Tired

Of Venice! Our Venice—incredible.

Vitalis.

But true!

Paulina. Two weeks ago——

Vitalis.

I ask your silence now.

You are my wife—my best beloved—have promised
A kind obedience. Now go! Collect
Your jewels, possessions, your wedding dower—your claim—
A parting pang; no more.

Paulina.

A parting pang;

No more; the heavens fall! If you must go,
Then go! My duty—my pleasure is here, my heart's
Desire—and here I stay.

Vitalis.

I have good reason.

Paulina. And I the same. Did I not once refuse
The proffered hand of Servia's king? Was it you
Or Venice that stole ambition? Contented me
With servile rank? A countess? who might have claimed
A royal crown! been consort of a king.
Instead the pleader's voice. Was it love of you,
That anchored me or love of Venice? I am
Unsure; today I glean it was love of Venice.
Venice! the beauteous, our father's dream.
How could I love, who speaks disdainfully?
O haste you now! make parting brief. Alone
I'll woo her smiles, if smile she will, when I
Am husbandless. But smiles or frowns, she is mine,
And I will supplicate. [*Melting into tears.*] What is this? weak
signs
Of grief? The tears o'erflow. My sweetheart, stay,
I would fain have both.

Vitalis.

And both are thine—both! both!—

To more distress, 'twould be a coward's part;
A worse than villain-deed. *Paulina, smile*
At what thou knowest not; but smile. Let peals
Of laughter dance those lips in shape, or kisses;
Come, these arms are languishing for thee.

[*As he kisses her, her pearl necklace loosens and drops on
the bench, unnoticed by either.*]

That comforts, another! another! alas, an end
To fond embrace. This feast—hast thou forgotten?
Can I unlearn the past, to sweeten it?
Why not? with such a wife! with such a wife.

Paulina. Who seeks to pleasure most her errant lord.

Vitalis. And he knows well and worships her—and yet—
This sharp, this stubborn pain—the scar we'll hide
With levity. 'Twill be a merry feast!
But gaze not so. Those two inquiring eyes
Disturb. They are uncivil, unless they note
A husband's calm authority; his cool
Assurance. I pray you go. I follow soon;
My fitful mood has passed.

[She rises and slowly moves toward the palace, twice turning with a troubled look. As she mounts the steps enter from above Giovanni, ushering Marco.]

Paulina. Good Signor Marco,
We welcome you. *[Exit Giovanni.]*

Marco. *[Kissing her hand.]* I trust my early presence
Comes not amiss.

Paulina. I said we welcome you.
My husband seems dispirited. See there!
He frowns and moves uneasily. Have you
No words of cheer?

Marco. I have the world's light talk;
But you, Signora, with your sweet comforting;
Has he refused your aid?

Paulina. He has, nor has
Divulged the source of his sad looks; they are
Deceptive looks; he has no grief—and yet—and yet—

Marco. I'll do my best, Signora.

Paulina. And I'll
Requite with gratitude. *[Exit.]*

Marco. [*Approaching Vitalis.*] How now, my friend?

Vitalis. Why Marco, not so well as hopes and wishes
Might desire; but better, I have no doubt,
Than some poor leprous wretch; there may be worse
Than I!

Marco. I think there may, not far from here.
This Marco; who must forego the luxury
Of doldrums, else might his friends turn coldly by.
Poor soul, he has no wealth; so smiles his way
To feast and kind attention,—fair winds for him.
But you are Count Vitalis, must I repeat?
Vitalis, whose name adorns our city records;
Whose palace bears the history of long
And fruitful service, feats of arms and deeds
Of sweet benevolence—a garnering
Of priceless treasures too; that kings might covet.
So Count Vitalis may dissolve in tears,
If he but pricks his finger, or stumps his toe;
May yield to megrims to suit the weather's whim.
Spoilt child of gilded fortune, I do pity!
I do envy him!

Vitalis. Then cease your gibes,
And lend a friendly ear. I know you well.
A cautious man, no babbler; one whose advice
May tally with my present hope, my wife's,
Though she conceives it not; must never! now listen!
Two weeks ago, O heavy date!—it seems
Two years—two weeks ago my saddle slipped,
The horse escaped and I, alone, afoot,
In our great hunting forest, must find the trail
That shorewards led. Through murky growth I pressed
Nor saw some twigs bent wickerwise. I pushed—
A fall of ghastly depth.—I lay and cowered
And felt the stenchy breath of beasts. They pawed
And sniffed at me, then crouched—two gruesome wolves!

Some bones strewn round gave venom'd hint of how
 They last had breakfasted; my turn was next—
 When hunger seized afresh. O dreadful death!
 So near so hideous. And then beyond,
 What terror still! Hell's torment! Unshriven sins
 Now clutched and ravened me.—A gabbling sound
 Had forced attention. I turned, a demon leered;
 Nor was content to wait—he chuckled mirth.
 I shrieked! An answer swiftly came—the voice
 Of heaven, or earth or hell? disordered sense
 Could fathom not. I faintly caught: "Who calls?"
 I shouted then with all my maddened strength:
 "A huntsman calls, beware this cursed pit,
 O haste you now, on haste depends his life."
 A breathless pause! and then a searching branch,
 A peasant spoke encouraging: "Hold fast
 And climb." How now? a sudden whirl. The demon
 Had seized my chance, had upwards sprung; one cry!
 The peasant fled, the devil after, and I
 Was left.

Marco. But you, my friend, are well, are here.
 What happened then?

[*A monkey's face peers for a minute
 amid the branches of the neighbouring tree. Vitalis starts,
 then gazes, panic stricken.*]

Vitalis. See! See! that leering face;
 The demon's face.

Marco. [*Looking round.*] But where?

Vitalis. [*Pointing.*] The demon! there!

Marco. But nothing stirs, no slightest sound. My friend,
 Have you indulged of late? This fairy tale!
 And visions now.

Vitalis.

The tale is true—too true—

Alas.—I felt the breath of wolves disturbed;
 In terror cried afresh. The peasant heard,
 Unwillingly returned; he peered and saw
 Dark forms that stalked; refused, by all the saints,
 His aid. I offered gold and treasure-stores;
 I bribed with jewels: "But what is wealth," he said,
 "Compared with life? No risk I'll run." And then
 I tendered him my palace; my everything.
 I was the great and powerful Count Vitalis;
 I swore to keep my word, by all those oaths
 That Venice holds inviolate. I swore
 My soul in jeopardy, should I withhold
 A tithe, a hundredth, yea a thousandth part
 Of all my proud possessions. He faltered then,
 And spoke of one, of Fina; who had his love,
 Abhorred his poverty—and then a branch—
 O heavenly sound! I grasped and climbed, was saved,
 Lost consciousness. The fellow, Massaccio, thus
 He named himself, lent kind assistance till,
 With feeble gesture, I staggered up and clutched
 His arm, to sob and moan my gratitude.
 He hushed me with a scornful look, asked where
 His palace stood. I proffered then a farm,
 With house and barns well-stocked, wide fields of grain,
 An orchard, gold to tempt a shrinking bride.

Marco. But he was obdurate?*Vitalis.*

He smiled and said:

"A Count is worth such paltry stuff, no more;
 But he has promised—two weeks I give."—He turned.
 Two weeks ago—and now—

Marco.

The Doge?

Vitalis.

Who chose

The date; I wished it not—I asked it not—

A sense of strange futility has held
Me captive till some moments since, and then
Arose a swift desire to free myself,
To break from Venice, its narrow limits, its smugness;
To leave the ship; whose odour stifles me,
To plough the waves upon the raft of chance,
Accept the peasant's terms, the terms dire luck
Had forced.

Marco. Leave Venice? our Venice!

Vitalis. So spoke my wife,
With accent thus incredulous, nor would
She listen. There is the deadlock. Leave my wife!
Un-venice-like that means myself.

Marco. And cause
For much rejoicing. Some reason then must smile
Within that sad, dejected frame.—A madman
Has sworn his goods away, a mind recovered
Now seeks to rescue them—and wherefore not?
So have your portal watched 'gainst chance invader.
These country folk are timorous, a loud,
Assertive voice and he is quelled, poor wretch;
And then, to satisfy; I'll act as steward,
Give him a just reward, no more; and none,
Unless he choose to sign, acknowledging
A cancelled debt. Your problem thins to nought.

Viaalis. Then let my conscience sleep, if sleep it will;
But no, the trouble is there. I must have time;
A breathing spell!

Marco. Your wife?

Vitalis. Who stirs me on
To take dishonour's course—for her—my wife—

[Enter Giovanni, left, through lower door. Advancing, he addresses Vitalis.]

Giovanni. Signor, I pray your pardon; our Mistress begs Your presence. Some guests have come.

Vitalis [*Rising and speaking slowly.*] She wishes me!

[*Exeunt, left, up the steps.*

The tuning of instruments is heard. Strains of pleasant music now drift from the palace during a lengthy interval on the stage, that is only broken when a monkey slides from the tree, picks up the pearl necklace dropped by Pauline and plays with it. After a time the monkey, with its spoil, vanishes in the tree. It appears, then vanishes again as voices are heard.

Enter, left, lower door, Massaccio, being dragged by Giovanni and followed by Bernardo with a broom.]

Massaccio. [*Struggling.*] Unhand me pray! I'll none of this. Am I Not master here? Let loose!

Giovanni. We'll master thee,
Enjoy the task. Bernardo! ply thy broom.
And listen: if thou dost raise thy voice, we'll so
Belabour thee, thou'lt be as stabbed with holes
As whipping cream, when Monsieur Chef hath frothed
It well,—unsweetened though and tasteless; sour
Thou'lt be as lemon juice, a deal more sour
Than thy puled looks at present. Long face, long face!
Away with thee! [*Trying to force Massaccio through the gate.*]

Massaccio. [*Holding back.*] Indeed I'll not; so cease
This merry jest, thy mocking scowls. I am here,
And here I stay!

Giovanni.
Apace! Bernardo! help!

One hearty shove. He flies

[*Instead of being pushed through the gate, Massaccio resists and drops on the seat lately vacated by Vitalis.*]

Massaccio. My breathless thanks!
This seat becomes my new estate. Ha! Ha!
I have slipped the noose. The table is turned, for know,
Young Master Impudence! thy service here
But measures his who wields the broom, who puffs,
And stares with those frog-bulging eyes of his.
And that's until I choose to say: Discharged
For rude assault; your wages forfeited.

Bernardo. Giovanni, grasp his arm, a sudden wrench
To teach good manners. I'll broom again, so, so.
Thy wages now. So, so!

[*Massaccio utters piercing screams.*
Enter Marco, left, running down the steps.]

Marco. Hold! hold! did I
Not warn to use some judgment, entice him through
The kitchen quarters, from thence evict him neck
And heels; but noiselessly. Your Master asks—

Massaccio. He asks and I reply. Tell him, 'tis I,
Massaccio, who came in state by gondola.
He knows my errand and will accede. It is not
My fault I now must plead thus beggarwise,
With hangdog-countenance, with clothing pulled
And torn, with flesh so trounced it quivers like
A tawny mass of jelly fish; but ah!
The sting is there—remember that, ye varlets!
Ye froward good-for-nothings! soon ye'll feel
Its tingling shock. And Signor What's-your-name?
Signor Officious, pray hasten, give my message,
My compliments. Tell Count Vitalis, Massaccio
Awaits his pleasure.

Marco. And long the waiting! So get
Thee gone. Go kick thy heels at home; nor tempt
More harsh rebuke, more vicious kicks abroad.

Bernardo. And given most ungrudgingly. [*Kicking Massaccio.*] So there,
And there! another! thy turn, Giovanni!

Massaccio. My flesh!
My flesh! great Heavens! O! O!

Marco. Stay thy shrieks!
And thou Bernardo! Giovanni! cease. Do ye
Forget the visitors? This brawling noise
Will soon attract. Massaccio, listen now:
The Count was told thy name, thy strange pretention,
His face was blank, then showed amaze and then
A mild displeasure and then he laughed and said:
"The man is mad or else it is rank imposture.
Have him removed with gentleness or force
To suit necessity. If he resist,
There is, as last resource, the inquisition,
Dungeons, irons, torture; but only that,
As last resource," the Count is tender-hearted.

Massaccio. And verily I do believe, a kind
And tender-hearted gentleman! but scorn,
Sarcastic words apart, has he well gathered,
'Tis I, Massaccio;—Massaccio!

Marco. Thou gavest thy name,
Made known thy forward claim and so repeated.
He has denied all knowledge and all promise.

Massaccio. A most ungrateful world. I scarcely thought
A courtly gentleman could be—could be
So tender hearted. A most ungrateful world;

Where bubbling hope is but a buoy misplaced,
 The channel's turn is missed; a sandbar looms;
 Its crunching grind disturbs, offends a tired
 And shipwrecked mariner. A most untoward,
 Ungracious world! but what is that? there! there!

[*The monkey appears for a second amid the leaves.*]

Giovanni. [*Looking at Massaccio.*] He is mad.

Massaccio. [*Pointing.*] The rustling leaves. The demon's
 face—
 There! there!

Bernardo. [*Examining the tree.*] There is nothing.

Massaccio. There! but no.
 The leaves have closed. I saw, I swear I saw—

Marco. A strange affair! The Count had visions too;
 He saw a loathy face that startled him,
 His own was blanched.

Bernardo. [*Hitting the branches with his broom.*] Then
 let us search; but no,
 There is nothing here. Such pommelling would soon
 Dislodge Satanic Majesty; if horns
 And tail had ventured. [*Lightly hitting Massaccio's head.*]
 Spooks! They're in that head
 Of thine, Massaccio.

Massaccio. And so the Count had visions;
 Delusions shared, a link that is riveted!
 But where is the proof? A poor man's word weighs light,
 A rich man's word bears evidence. I'll save
 My breath—what is left.

Giovanni. [*Clutching him.*] And save thine audience.

Massaccio. Nor further tempt its rudeness; hands off! I
 have
 No wish to tarry, no wish to break my head
 Against stone barriers, nor further test
 A tender-hearted Count's most kindly welcome.
 I bid farewell! A most ungrateful world!
 My aching bones and smarting flesh repeat:
 "A most ungrateful world!"

Marco. And who denies?
 Not I; but thou shouldst thank thy lucky stars
 The lesson is learnt thus easily. For some
 The constant clank of hammer-strokes. Content
 Thyself; now off! else may a passing pain
 Be changed to life-disquiet. So ho! Bernardo!
 The broom! Av brandish it. He fairly begs
 Thy teaching blows.

Massaccio. O! O! [*Exit running through the gate.*]

Marco. At last his heels.
 A friendly service! Though sweat may sour, the Count
 Should light some pressing claims. I'll mop my brow,
 Then in. [*Exit, left, up the steps.*]

Giovanni. He runs to gain emolument,
 Although the work was ours.

Bernardo. We've had our laugh.
 Come, let us bar the gate, then follow.

Giovanni. But hark!
 Those citherns! and voices now—the Doge! the Doge!

[*Guitar-like sounds are heard in the distance. Exeunt hurriedly, left, through lower door, after closing the gate; but forgetting to bolt it. Pleasant music drifts from the*

house. After a somewhat long interval enter *Massaccio*, pushing open the gate. He advances furtively. The music suddenly ceases.]

Massaccio. The garden is empty—still as death, and yet I fear this venture: it is unwise to tempt,
If not fresh blows and stripes, a harsher doom.
That demon lures me back; we both have seen.
It beckoned, or fancy shadowed it. Shall I
For vain bravado's sake or prying thirst
Invoke Satanic power? The Saints forbid!
I'll fly this cruel spot; but how? what is this?
My feet are glued with nightmare-weight, and then,
The silence! Yes, fate wills. I'll see it through.
And look! the branches part. The grinning face!

[*The monkey is clearly seen in the tree. It mutters and dangles the pearl necklace, inviting Massaccio to take it.*]

But not so villainous, a coaxing leer.
What is this? a beaded chain! He seeks to tempt.
Shall I accept the gewgaw? hold my soul
So cheaply, endangering for trumpery?
And yet my feet are drawn, my hand outstretches;
Fate wills, let Fate acknowledge blame, not I.

[*He takes the necklace and examines it.*]

No worthless bauble this—a string of pearls
So beautiful! the sweeping of Heaven's floor
More like, than cindry gift from hell's abasement.
How now! [*Looking up.*] by all the powers both good and ill,
A monkey, an organ-grinder's monkey, no more,
No less. Man fashions bogeys out of fear;
God builds with saner stuff. An honest beast!
A grateful beast! These pearls are tinged with hope;

Exchanged for gold they'll buy my Fina's love,
 My happiness, and what is life without?
 For this, good monkey-friend, accept my homage.
 A gracious deed transforms thy puckered face,
 Lends elegance and charm. I'll weave some verse
 Extolling it, dispraising man; who bears
 An outward likeness; who boasts his tender heart;
 But fails to act. Farewell, good Monkey-friend,
 Farewell. I'll haste away, change pearls to coin,
 And coin to marriage bells.—But first a goldsmith.

[As Massaccio turns the monkey disappears. Enter through the gate Antonello carrying some favours, followed by Niccolo, armed with a cudgel.]

Antonello. The gate invites us now, most fortunate!

Massaccio. Your pardon, Signor, dwells a goldsmith near?

Antonello. The very man thou seekest; but thou art scarce
 A customer... Indeed my shop is dark
 With shuttered gloom, well barred and chained 'gainst such
 As thee. Be warned, nor question more.

Massaccio. A goldsmith!
 A wish has conjured him! what happens next?

Antonello. A wish would banish thee, where fire awaits.
 Thy cudgel, Niccolo! 'twill warm the going.

[Niccolo pommels Massaccio with his cudgel.]

Massaccio. Mercy! I pray your mercy! I crave attention.

Antonello. Niccolo! thy kind attention, more muscle,
 More strength! Neglect him not. He loves the smart.

Massaccio. The Devil is in these grounds, I think; I more

Than think. I have good purpose though. [*Holding out the necklace.*] See! see!

This gaud will change your wrath to begging greed.

Aha—you cease your churlish play. The urchin

Retires his spikes. So, so, and safer so.

But not such eagerness; your distance pray.

The sight of crowns would lend more confidence.

Till then, I'll act as showman. Look, admire!

Each bead, a flawless round! Murano's work

Is shamed when mushy oysters so aspire.

How softly rich! a wisp of cloud might hold

Such tints, as frothing forth from thundry skies,

It traps, through very purity, a ray

Of light diffused beyond. You see, my friend,

The pearls flare up with poesy. They ask

A bid that has some vision too.

Antonello.

Then let

Them soothe themselves with honest prose. Come now,

Your price? what is it?

Massaccio.

Politer tones suggest

My rank has risen much, a merchant! they show

The pearls have value, a price commensurate!

Antonello. Then Niccolo will lower it. Your price?

A fair one! or cudgel blows will bargain.

[*Niccolo gives some hints with his weapon before punishing anew.*]

Massaccio.

Mercy!

A moment's thought! one thousand crowns! at least—

One thousand crowns!

Antonello.

A thousand strokes, more like!

That modest sum gives lie to honesty,

As though mine eyes had seen. Each larger pearl

Is worth its double.

IN A VENETIAN GARDEN

Massaccio. Have done! I shrank the price
 To parry blows, they rain the heavier;
 This garden is filled with vile bedevilment.
 I'll shake its dust, cast back one grateful thought
 For pearls presented. [*Dodging, he reaches the gate.*]

Niccolo. Pearls! they'll fetch reward.
 Hi thief! thou'lt bite the dust, this garden's dust.

[*Catching Massaccio, he throws him to the ground.*]

Antonello. Well done! hold firm! had we some rope to
 tether!

Niccolo. I'll straddle him.

Massaccio. Ho! Help!

Niccolo. Let shrieks come louder.
 The noise should fetch a constable, so save
 Your steps, Patrone.

[*Enter Marco, left, down the steps.*]

Marco. [*Advancing excitedly.*] Hist! hist! no noise! The
 Doge!
 This horseplay, cease!

Niccolo. It is sober earnestness,
 A thief! and mark; if there is reward, I share.

Marco. Who is this? Massaccio back! The devil's prank!
 Of all the plagues! [*Pulling Niccolo.*] Let loose, I say, let loose,
 Thou fool.

Niccolo. [*Shaking him off.*] The fool is beneath, a thievish
 brute;
 And wit bestrides till wit gains recompense.

Marco [*Addressing Antonello.*] Good Master Goldsmith,
I pray you!—Time presses.
The Count has company; the Doge is there;
Those seats await—and this unseemly sport!

Antonello. I have some favours here, am much belated;
But Signor Marco, this rustic, this loutish one
Has pearls, has stolen——

Marco. Let be! It matters not.

Antonella. It matters much. The pearls are exquisite,
A bridal dower of most unusual worth.

Marco. So be, the fellow is known.

Antonello. Is known or not,
I search him first, will have the pearls. [*Searching Massaccio.*]

Massaccio. [*Struggling.*] Hi! hi!
Help! help!

[*Enter left, down the steps, Bernardo and Giovanni, in waiting, Vitalis, the Doge, Paulina, Moro, Councillors, other Guests and Attendants.*]

Marco. Confusion now! nor time to think.
Yet slip behind those shrubs. All! all!—They see,
Alas!—They come.

Doge. [*Advancing.*] Is this some drollery
Signor Host, to whet our appetite?

Vitalis. [*Confused.*] Why no; Serenity. I am unsure.
It is—I fear it though—

Bernardo. [*Peering at Massaccio.*] As I am alive!
Massaccio back! a prisoner.

Massaccio. [*Sitting up as his tormentors let go of him.*]

A fool

To tempt this garden's hospitality;
Twice fool to further tempt.

Doge.

I have no inkling;

There comes a flash! Our dear Vitalis, you
Complain a clownless state. The King is dead,
Long live the King! Why here is a twice-made fool,
Himself proclaims. We'll give him crown and sceptre,
Acknowledge a thrice-made fool, a peerless fool. [*Addressing*
Giovanni.]

Go fetch the hood coxcombed with asses ears,
The jester's bauble, the garment parti-coloured,
Nor keep us long. [*Turning again to Vitalis.*] Your pardon,
Signor Host.

[*Exit Giovanni, left, through lower door.*]

Vitalis. Your wish is law, Serenity; I like
It not—a sorry joke.

Doge.

We'll live it.

And jokes, my age has taught, that brink on tears,
Are often most telling. But tears, there are no tears,
Unless they're caged behind the sulky veil,
That masks our genial host. No friendliness!
Pretend some welcome. Let smiles play peek-a-boo,
A brave attempt! There flickers a kithless one,
The sort of smile a widower might force
When called to greet condoling friends. And better!
A boy might so contort his lips, who hides
A truancy from school. I touch the mark;
Some mischief! Nay, nay, forgive an old man's teasing,
At heart, much more a boy than sixty years
Should count. So let us play; while playtime lasts.

[*He seems lost in thought, all gaze at him, excepting Marco, who whispers to Antonello, while drawing him and Niccolo behind the trees.*]

Marco. I beg a silent tongue, the man is here,
Is safe. To speak of stolen goods would damp
Festivity. If need arrives, why then—

[*Enter Giovanni, left, lower door, hastening with a bundle. He kneels before the Doge.*]

Giovanni. Good Messer Doge. I've hastened back.

Doge.

Ay, ay,

The fool's accoutrements, a timely fool!
Come oaf, explain thy presence here.

Massaccio. [*Rising from the ground.*] Invite
More blows? my tortured flesh cries halt! Enough.
A twice-made fool, a saddened man or one
That is doubly wise. Henceforth I trim my sails
To suit the breeze.

Doge. [*Fastening the hood on Massaccio.*] That blows
most pleasantly.
Away with dolors, dumps, crestfallen looks.
A crown for thee, our jester.

Giovanni. [*Helping arrange the hood.*] He needs it not,
Good Messer Doge. He claims he is master, can order
As it pleases him, the house is his,
The grounds, our very selves. He shies at nothing.
Shatter-brained, these asses' ears denote
His stubbornness.

Doge.

A fool who lords it over;
Who swears he is doubly wise, the very fool!

Though I have teased his counterpart, they flood
The world! We'll humour him.

Giovanni. [*Holding up the wand and some diminutive parti-coloured garments.*] But see these clothes!
They are absurd.

Doge. [*Accepting the wand, which he later offers to Massaccio.*] It matters not, the hood
With tattered garb is droll enough—Ha! ha!
He shakes his head, then listen now the bells,
That tune with laughter's sound, a pleasant note.
Good fool, here is thy wand, extend to us.
We bend to thee, our Master, a fool thrice-made;
Whose wisdom grows, the very fool to rule
Our fête—e circumflex, not a.—

[*Massaccio holds out the wand, while the men bow and the women courtesy.*]

Massaccio. There wafts
A fairer wind, we tack, so ride to port,
Nor be submerged.

Doge. Your task is to whistle winds
And ours to meekly bear. Your favour though;
We'd have a breeze that comes from clover fields,
That holds the scent of honeyed dew, that leads
To revelry.

Massaccio. It has not blown of late,
My writhing frame can testify; but I
May be advised, a merry tune should ease
My smarting flesh, and dull these twinging darts.
I'll face the west; beyond its fringing pines
Are clover fields and beds where roses blush.

[*He whistles a very attractive tune, as he finishes all clap.*]

Guests. Bravo! Encore!

[*He whistles an even merrier tune. Hearty clapping follows.*]

Doge. A pleasant tune, it holds
The chaunt of forest birds, it is alive
With mirth, with wishful happenings. What is
Your Lordship's will?

Massaccio. A friendly bench,
A soft and cushioned bench—a jolly tune
May ease the soul, it fails the flesh—Uh! uh!

Doge. [*Offering seat prepared for him.*] This throne-like
chair I yield to you, and choose
A less pretentious one. We wish to seat
Ourselves; I pray you wave authority,
Or nod the bells that prate of foolish doings;
Ah, ha!

[*Massaccio solemnly sits on the Doge's chair. A droll figure, he nods and waves his wand. Paulina's chair is next. She advances, then turns with disgust and takes a humbler one. Hers is left empty. Vitalis and his guests seat themselves.*]

Massaccio. I am truly master here, or thus
It seems. A mimic stage and puppets wired
And I, a puppet too. A puppet lord!
Who waves and nods and all in humbleness
Obey. A puppet lord! are rulers so?
Who shifts their strings? what force maintains their power?
I give it up! a puppet lord! let chance
Play cicerone.

Doge. And appetite!

Massaccio. [*Waving his wand until trays are passed.*]
True, true!

Another wave, and here refreshments come.
A goodly life! and may it last! I'll sate
Myself until the showman jolts his wires
And tangles us.

Vitalis. [*Addressing the Doge.*] Serenity, we pray
Indulgence; a light repast, enough we hope
To steal the boredom, should our masque so prove
Itself; though not to usher withering yawns;
Indoors a banquet waits; but first the play!

Massaccio. A play, within a play, the very thing;
A real play, a puppet audience!
Is Count Vitalis pleased? Can puppets feel?
They hunger though—for I—

Doge. [*When offered refreshments he indicates Massaccio.*] A proper hint.
Why lacqueys, are ye not trained in etiquette?
Pray serve his clownish lordship first.

Massaccio. [*Helping himself, then drinking.*] Delicious!
I drink to lesser mortals.

Marco. And we to rags
And asses' ears.

Doge. Insult him not, our jester!
I like his confidence. We'll drink to that!

Massaccio. [*Glancing round as though in search.*] If I be
Master, there lacks a gracious something,
This empty chair suggests a lady-wife—
And I have one in view, the fairest wench
These lands have yet produced. Hey presto! here
She dwells.

Vitalis. This joke has passed all bounds!

Paulina. [*Rising.*]

And am

I thus insulted? Serenity! this man
Humiliates, to bring the thought of me
Within the compass of his jest throws mire
Upon our house, our proud escutcheon. I pray
Your leave; I would retire; a hostess sullied,
Shorn of dignity, is but a blot!
She darkens where sunny looks should flatter friends.

Doge. I must avow the fault, a grievous one,
To so offend our winsome hostess. A doge
O'erleaps the bounds when he prescribes; a mouthpiece,
A clotheshorse, a nobody, all is well; but let
His humour surge, one cries: "dictatorship!
Down with him!" and now as guest it might
Be termed officiousness and fairly so.
I crave your pardon, I have betrayed it.

Moro.

Signora!

In council-work we fear the Doge and hedge
Him round, a wild steer dazed he seems; but this
Is holiday, may he not paw the ground
And circle as he pleases.

Paulina. [*Reseating herself.*] Upsetting all
Convention!

Moro. And even so.

Massaccio. [*Addressing Paulina.*] Red hair! firebrand!
A blaze for nothing! Make you my wife? Avaunt
The thought. The beach has smother pebbles, and one,
I looked for her; she works within. Her eyes
Are dark as sloe's, her cheek is carmine-flushed,
The rouge that sun and winds have lavished there,
That deepens, when kisses shower.

Paulina. 'Tis well thou knowest
Thy distance. Impudence has measured it.

Moro. Signora! let things be, the Doge has willed.
And he is privileged to-day. A fool
May prate, what matters it? a smile withdraws
The sting from badinage; an injured air
Adds salt to self-made wounds.

Paulina. You are right, Signor,
I stand rebuked. If humour lacks, then blame
My sex; but I'll be no spoil-sport. There is
A country maid; she is pert and smart. Her name
Is Fina. Let her be called, if such be she
That is chosen and such the Doge's wish.

Massaccio. Which shows
I well described the wench. She is unsurpassed.

Doge. Then send for her, we'd view such loveliness;
Though troth our hostess here doth satisfy.
[*Exit Giovanni, left, lower door.*]

Paulina. I tender thanks.

Massaccio. I know the thanks, most proud
And haughty thanks;—but I will whistle thanks,
A lover's tender tune.

[*He whistles softly, then stops abruptly as enter Giovanni and Fina, left, lower door.*]

Doge. Ah, here she comes,
A winsome maid, a damask rose, there is no denying.
Fina! this—this gentleman desires
A wife, pretence thou knowest. Live up to it.
We'll "you" you then, his lady-wife!

Fina. [*Astonishment gives her voice.*] Massaccio!
I'll none of him! a good-for-nought, who blinds
Himself with sunset's glow and sings of it,
Or prates to birds and butterflies; at best
A strolling actor's part keeps life within.
Indeed I'll none of him! The jester's cap
Becomes him well, and so my hint has fruited,
He has applied, though then his fancy walked
Breast-high with lords. [*Looking round.*] This company! The
Doge!

The Count and Countess! Confusion covers me. [*Curtesying.*]

Doge. [*Pointing to the empty chair.*] There is no need—
come seat yourself. Come, Fina.
Poor Massaccio, twice repulsed.

Massaccio. Alas!
But love impels.

Fina. O look! the silly creature!
Forgive me, Messer Doge! I shake with laughter.

Doge. Troth, that oggle, beneath the coxcomb-hood,
Would shake a funeral! I shake myself!
Why Fina, girl, it is a game worth playing;
If it doth plunge us thus in merriment.
Sit there! Obey!

Fina. [*Seating herself.*] But etiquette! my place!

Doge. So like the woman! convention! etiquette!
And all that is sobering—cold water drips.

Fina. [*Appealing to Paulina.*] My Lady?

Paulina. We are your servants. That fool beside you
Is lording it, he is the master here;
He owns this place, is privileged. He says—

Vitalis. [*Interrupting.*] Speak not thus lightly!

Fina. [*Answering Paulina.*] Yes, he told me so.
I understand when in this garb.—Signora,
Pray let me go. To be so prominent,
So coupled! I like it not. It is punishment.

Doge. Nay, nay a jest! laugh girl! a sip of wine
Will cheer! [*Handing his glass to Fina.*]

Massaccio. And so I lord it here,—with Fina.
Pretence or not the moment pleases.

Doge.
A song—a song—a song to Fina's eyes.
They snap, though beauty lustres them.

Ah then

Massaccio.

Black orbs that hold disdain
Have ye no softer passion?
Why should I shrink with pain
In this most cruel fashion?

Black orbs of starless night,
Is there no ray that is kinder?
No trace of dawning light?
No cupid-god reminder?

It is not right this rhythm's tone,
It is bedrowned in sob and moan,
And so I cease, forego my song
When life and rhythm both are wrong.

Doge. Poor fool, we pity thee!

Fina.
He follows me, he bothers me, pretends
That "No" is "Yes."

His fault alone;

Doge.

And so impales himself.

Poor fool! the world has many such, and we
Are lost among them.

[*The long grass, on the near side of a sandy hillock where the masque takes place, begins to move. The Wavelets rise one by one and gently dance.*]

Vitalis. Serenity, the dancers!

Doge. Ay they dance, delusion pipes.

Massaccio.

Delusion?

The very ground is shifting; enchantment reigns.
What next? a most kaleidoscopic world.

Wavelets.

We are the waves that sparkle with mirth,
Purling with sands in our play.
Shifting, unloading and welding the earth,
Bridling and tossing our spray.

Storm Waves. [*Rising from the further side of the hillock.*]

We are the waves that relentlessly beat,
Crushing great fragments of rock,
Flinging the boulders like splinters of wheat,
Cowering the lands with our mock.

Wavelets.

Ay, ye may pride, ye may grind at your will,
We with our laughter will soothe,
Gathering the sands that ye recklessly spill,
Moulding with finger-tips smooth.

Storm Waves.

Vain is your labour for crested we rise,
Shaken with storm-clouds of wrath,

IN A VENETIAN GARDEN

Down with your vision, sand-castles ye prize,
 Strewn with a wreckage of froth.

Wavelets.

Nay there's a master who'll throttle your power,
 Man for whose comfort we build;
 Here he will gladden, will watch from his tower—
 Fair is our purpose fulfilled.

Storm Waves.

Man who may venture we lure to his doom,
 Suck to the chasms beneath.
 Waters unstable will letter his tomb,
 Dark as the shadow of death.

Wavelets.

Horrors ye picture; but man will escape,
 Loved by the gods who enthrone,
 Bringing to promise the sands that we shape,
 Lording with marvels of stone.

Storm Waves.

Hark! there's an echo, the breath of a man,
 First to adventure, to dare.
 Let us shrink silent, discover his plan,
 Wavelets may frolic; beware!

[*The Storm Waves sink in the long grass. The Wavelets dance very prettily throwing blue ribbons to one another. They pause as enter Antenor, appearing behind a bush. He carries a bundle and supports himself with a staff. He wears a leopard skin. The Wavelets show surprise, then stand listening, swaying at times with approval or disapproval.*]

Antenor. [*Resting on his staff.*] A wanderer from Troy,
 from fallen Troy,
 Asylum here I seek, to build in dreams

Again. Antenor, I, of leopard-brain;
Whose skin doth mantle me; whose skin hath marked
A traitor's house, so saved from wrecking Greek.
My sons and I bore wealth away. Alone,
Of all the Trojans, we saved our gold, our stores,
Our household stuff. Our heads are not as high
As those who fled unburdened. My leopard-brain
Had worked, our hands are unclean; though first I counselled
To send her back, the high-born Helen, cause
Of endless woe; of what avail? To lead
Young men to combat fair ideals must beckon.
Send her back? The Greeks would laugh, their Elders
Would trump another hectic guiding; never
The cold acknowledgement: our Troy was rich.
Effulgent queen! She lavished wealth. They wished
Our trade. They had the strength. If Troy must perish,
Then why prolong? The blue-eyed Pallas had turned
From us, disdained our offerings; I pressed
The hand of Argive's chief, I whispered him.
On Ilium's height our house still testifies,
All else is ruined. And now, shame-driven, I wear
This leopard-skin—the gods work from within.

Wavelets.

Then heed the words that softly speak:
We yield these isles that are so bleak;
Teach Trojan ways and Trojan life;
Where waters hold secure from strife.
If craft must be, then for the State;
Let selfish ends to her abate.
From honest trade let beauty spring;
She'll grow apace, with spreading wing.
Unblessed to steal what others prize;
Make strong one's own, till visions rise.

[Antenor looks upward, then glances down and discovers
the Spirit of Venice whose figure is partly hidden by a
ridge of sand and partly by garments of the same hue.]

Antenor. And who is this? a sleeping form or dead?

Wavelets.

Designed by us, this shape so fair,
We have laved and stroked with watchful care;
She is not dead, bend low and kiss,
Antenor's shame dissolves in bliss.

[Antenor stoops and reverently kisses Venice; who stretches and rises, looking around much surprised.]

She is not dead, she rises now,
A beauteous maid, with cultured brow.
Bedeck with gifts, befitting her;
The wealth that burns, in pride, confer.

Venice. Old man, I have dreamt; but never seen till now.
Why hast thou wakened me?

Antenor. *[Undoing his bundle and presenting gifts.]*

Live! live! I bring
Fair gifts. This garment richly woven as though
The blue-eyed Pallas had fingered it and gazed
Its azure tint; these pearls of purity;
The helmet, gold with glancing stones. Rise, Venice!
From sands have grown this picture colourful.
Now dance, rejoice, be gay with laughter.

Venice.

I am

Superb—I much admire your gifts—I live,
I live! the waves will sing my destiny.

Antenor. . . Ah then farewell, my work is done; the waves
That sing may swallow me. Farewell, farewell.

[Antenor moves between the wavelets and so exit behind a bush. Venice throws kisses after him.]

Wavelets.

Dance while we throw the blue ribbons of joy,
Venice has risen a pearl.
Fairest of maidens, prodigious though coy,
Dance while our ribbons uncurl.

[*Venice dances with wonderful lightness and Grecian grace. The Wavelets curling and uncurling their ribbons.*]

Storm Waves. [*Rising and throwing out purple banners.*]
Down with their laughter, and down with their pride,
We, the fell harpies, arise;
Thrusting our banners, uplifting the tide—
Thunder and whirlwind and cries.

Wavelets. [*Sinking in the grass.*]
Mercy, O mercy, their lashings have told,
Silent we sink to our lair.
Dimmed are the sparkles, dark banners unfold,
Whipping the roar of despair.

Venice.

Mercy! O mercy; I fall to the ground;
Dark are the horrors that surge,
Figures of wrath that trundle and pound;
Soon will their tossings submerge.
Antenor has vanished—the Gods of Troy. Help! help!

[*Enter St. Mark, forced on the hillock by the Storm Waves.*]

Mark. Who calls? through din, lamenting sounds. Down,
down!

Ye powers of ill. I have cozened you. Ye sought
To shatter. Your pinion's flap but furthered me.

Down! down! Cease moaning cries. The silence echoes:
Who calls? who calls? [*The Storm Waves sink from view.*]

Venice. [*Reassured.*] Old man, art thou a god?

Mark. His messenger; yet woe bespeaks: my ship
Is lost—and I—

Venice.

But thou hast saved.

Mark. Then God
Hath purposed all; the surges ply his trade.
There is no ill; if ~~the~~ ^{no} convoys where service
Calls to us.

Venice. Old man, old man, thy face
Is restful. It comforts me. Wilt thou not stoop
And kiss?

Mark. [*Quietly kissing her.*] Thy brow.

Venice. Hast thou no glittering gift?
No ornament?

Mark. [*Handing her a wooden cross.*] This cross.

Venice. And nothing more?

Mark. My bones, my withered flesh.

Venice. Old man, I shudder.

Mark. Nay, thou'lt garland them. If thou wilt live,
Give praise to him, whose word is Truth unfettered,
Unafraid.

Venice. [*Covering her eyes.*] I fear; I fear.

Mark.
Have courage.

Behold!

[*Venice looks up ecstatically, raising the cross. Exit St. Mark quietly, first turning to bless.*]

Venice. [*Looking round.*] He vanishes—so ends our masque. [*Exit gracefully.*]

Doge. A doleful note, a solemn note.

Vitalis.
Methinks; and not intended thus. Whose fault,
Paulina?

Too sad,

Paulina. [*Unintentionally touching her neck, she discovers her loss.*] My pearls!

Doge. Your pearls, Signora?

Paulina.
Was frayed. We'll search anon.

The cord

Antonello. [*Advancing and addressing Marco.*] And let the rogue
Play laughing truant; unconcerned he yawns.

Marco. His time will come, have patience; whist!

Niccolo. [*Pushing past Antonello.*]
Will speak.

But I

Marco. [*Restraining him.*] Hush! Silence!

Niccolo. [*Struggling.*]

Unloose me! I, Niccolo!

Paulina. Thou hast—

Niccolo. Most gracious lady, what guerdon is offered?
Is't bountiful?

Paulina. I had not thought—

Doge. [*Addressing Niccolo.*] Thou hast
The pearls. Deliver them.

Niccolo. I have them not.

Doge. Thou hast some knowledge?

Niccolo. A worthless secret, so
It seems. A poor apprentice should be used.
Sour grapes—what is gold but jaundiced stuff?
I will divulge for pleasantry, to see
That reptile cringe, that smug-faced rascal, that—

Marco. Signora, Signora, protest against him; refuse
To listen then. I warn—else billows break.

Paulina. Those crested waves! I liked them not. Come
friends,
Serenity, the banquet waits. Let us
Within. The ground gives forth a damp, the wind
Grows chill.

Massaccio. If I do lord it still, I nod
Acceptance. Come Fina, dear Fina, we'll usher them,
Preceding.

Doge. The honour is thine, Massaccio. The play is
Unfinished yet.

Niccolo. That ass to sup from gold

And I to sniff afar! a faulty end;
Too flat; I'll liven it. Good Messer Doge!

Paulina. Unbearable! have you no voice, Vitalis?

Vitalis. If underlings so dare; who humours them?

Doge. Your pardon, friend, if jokes surcharge, it is
Life's privilege, let us enjoy them.

Niccolo. Then have
Him searched, that popinjay! that petted fool!
Let justice act its part, nor wink to please
Grand company.

Doge. Massaccio, thou hast heard.
Prove innocence. There is punishment for slurs,
For false denouncing.

Massaccio. Proof? Are coxcombe-cap
And asses ears conducive? Proof—what is it?
A pack of cards the moneyed man will shuffle,
A loaded die, a ball to juggle, a fact
That is writ with purplish ink upon my shins,
That sears within.

Moro. He fails the issue, let him
Be searched.

Niccolo. There is heyday now, when he that puffs
Importance must shrink to whine for mercy, must worm
And reel, ashake with whimpered plaints.

[*Giovanni holds Massaccio while Bernardo searches him.*]

Bernardo. [*Discovering the necklace.*] The pearls!

Massaccio. Mine own! a gift, most honestly acquired.
A monkey's gift—he followed me.

Bernardo. [*Handing Paulina the pearls.*] Signora.

Paulina. Thief! each pearl denounces him;
Each perfect curve that blends with each acclaims
Its resting place, the clasp gives evidence—
“Paulina” traced with tiny gems. Vitalis,
The loss has caused a cloud; will your dear hands
Not gather luck; embody sweet reminders
In the fastening of this, my prized,
My marriage string?

Doge. Vitalis, does her appeal,
Her tender glance not force those frowns aside?
Has Hymen’s torch forgot its glow?

Vitalis. [*Fastening Paulina’s necklace.*] It burns
As ever.—That rogue disturbs. Away! we charge
Him not, the pearls repose where softness dwells.

Paulina. They soften me, their sweet return! To lose,
Then find, gives added charm. I pray you now,
Dismiss the thief, nor bandy words, nor waste
Our temper.

Niccolo. Then am I robbed of merriment,
A bitter world!

Massaccio. A baffling world; whose favour
When grasped, takes goblin-flight or turns to ash
Of misery.

Marco. A lenient world for such
As thou.

Massaccio. An honest man, no thief; nor will
I go beclouded thus. If good intention
Dwells in places high, then must it speak;

Befriending one who climbs for golden fruit—
Who steals thereby his Fina's love.

Fina.
Good Messer Doge, I scorn his proffered hand.
A thief! a miscreant!

He is mad,

Massaccio.

A fool who dotes!

Doge. Let folly talk, give lie to evidence.
Whence came the pearls?

Massaccio.

A lengthy tale.

Vitalis.
The telling.

Then spare

Moro. He has the right.

Massaccio.

To shorten then:

A forest-pit for trapping game had caught
A fearsome crew, a wareless Count who shrilled
Distress, two snarling wolves, a fluttering morsel,
Whose chatter dinned the rest. I risked to save,
A demon jumped or so it seemed. I feared
And started back. Still came beseeching cries;
By all those solemn oaths that Venice holds
Inviolatè; if I would risk afresh,
His wealth, his home were mine, his humble saviour.
I poled the branch where terrors lurked. This time,
A spineless fish—[*Shaking his fist at Vitalis.*] cold-blooded
perjurer.

Moro. His name?

Massaccio.

Vitalis! Count Vitalis!

Vitalis.

A madman!

Our Fina, who knows him, so asserts; or one,
Whose fertile brain devises false recital,
To blurr his heinous crime with garbled words,
To rove afar from fault discovered, to dodge
Its consequence.

Massaccio. How else make clear the truth?
The beast which first emerged, the lesser one,
Which nothing promising yet gave the pearls,
May well have touched the law, not I.

Moro.

What beast?

Massaccio. Close by, some moments since,
A monkey's ghost or flesh that is veined with blood.
It found me much discomfited; the Count
Had paid for life with murderous blows. Those varlets!
It pitied, gave the pearls.

Moro.

A nursery tale!

Massaccio. I scarce can grasp myself; if phantasy,
Delusion,—whence came the pearls? and where am I?

Moro. Signor Vitalis, know you this man, Massaccio?
His accusation's thrust?

Vitalis.

I know him not,
Most noble Signor, nor his fantastic drivell.
Let him slip quietly off, he troubles me.

Moro. A gentle heart; but justice works. One reads
The peasant's guilt, he is confused, has lost
His story's thread.

Doge. [*Aside.*]
Amiss.

Or seeks to straight what seems

Moro.

A knave! a cheat! his lunacy

Is mere pretence, a flimsy one. Have him
Removed where dungeon-crypt may prove the adage:
Filth-balls do backwards bounce, when tossed against
The might that serves in Venice.

Massaccio.

To lose the sun;

'Twould be to frost my life, the twain are linked
As rested heart that beats 'gainst heart, when love
Is kind. Shall winter frost my cheeks ere blushed
With July's warmth, with love's fulfilment? Fina!
Speak for me! Is there no friendliness?
This fool's attire, it suffocates! [*Throwing aside hood and*
wand.] Will rags

Not importune? She turns away. Youth loves
Success, a brave attire; but misery
Must plead. Downtrodden, griped with harch dilemma,
Stultified and stressed, I now forego
All claim to lordly pleasance, to marble halls,
To wealth's emolument, life's gilded show;
I crave for life itself, for naked life,
That is bathed with sunshine-mirth, that babbles 'neath
The stars. [*Kneeling.*] O Signor Vitalis! your influence!
Abandon not! Remember one, who chanced
For you, who asks but flowing words, a prayer
Of intercession, a simple exercise
Of wit. On bended knee, with eyes that stream,
I crave this easy service, I, that heeded,
That risked his all, when balancing to keep
A straight the pathway-branch, while upwards swayed
A puling fugitive; who crawled thereby
From ghastly death. But think! to sprawl 'mid filth
And vile, suggestive bones, till bulging wolves
O'er surfeited, are stirred with playful langour,
To tease and maul soft, shrinking flesh; to jag
And tear and rend, ay list his shrieks! Dull moans
Enseue. Blood-lust or hunger-urge now drives

Sharp, saffron teeth, wet-slobbering, deep; deep;
With crunching sound.

Vitalis. [*Covering his face.*] Hold! hold! enough!

Paulina. Enough!
Defend us! I sicken One pictures—have him secured.
A madman's cell.

Massaccio. Uncover! Signor Vitalis,
Conscience wakes, it knocks insistently,
It pounds: "Give him that freedom God's beasts demand:
To stretch, to run amuck, wild capering
'Neath forest trees, to clamber upwards or plunge
In cooling streams, find sustenance as they.
To coil where centuries have cushioned earth
With fragrant brown that pines have needled forth;
There sleep untossed by false, misteaching dreams;
Whose gorgeous vistas shift when dancing steps
Push lightly forward, groping hands but clutch
At nothingness. O save me, Signor! one word,
One little word, acknowledging.

Vitalis. [*Raising his right hand.*] A strange
And fearsome man! whose rambling speech convicts.
Have him away, I know him not, nor aught
Of him. Must I repeat? I know him not.
It is said. [*Beckoning to attendants to seize Massaccio.*]

Massaccio. [*Shaking them off.*] Stay, Varlets! Signor, but
glance at me.
One fleeting glance! Mine eyes would force the truth,
That flutters 'neath those caging lids.

Vitalis. Begone!
Enough! why haunt me thus? why harp? He has
No proof, most noble Signors, no evidence.

Where are his witnesses? [*A rustling in the tree attracts his attention. The monkey peeps from amid the leaves.*]

O would my words
Were eaten! There!—there! I have conjured one.
The demon that scoffed, Hell's fiend-ambassador.

Massaccio. God-sent deliverance—O God, thy praise!
Do I deserve; who asked from earth? nor called
The Power that moves.

Doge.

A monkey!

Moro.

Which stole the pearls.

The link that straightens the story. Signor Vitalis,
Give answer now.

Doge.

We grieve this happening.

My wayward joke has slipped its bounds, has lurched
'Gainst masked Melpomene; a frailty though
Too villainous to bear her honoured name.

Paulina. Vitalis, speak! give lies their death, break loose
From infamy, wipe slurs away. Your wife
Petitions you, your honour pleads.

Moro.

It is dumb;

A lifeless thing, foresworn.

Paulina.

Vitalis! speak!

Your name demands, your ancestry, that line
Of lustrous magnitude that stretches back
To holy, struggling days; when life was pure;
When stars and clouds and rosy brilliancy
Brought messages from God.

Moro.

He stands accused,

His silence speaks. The skyey blue is deep,
Unchanged; but God has testified; this beast—
Its outer self—portrays repellent sin;

Ingratitude, abhorred by God, that worms
 Its way through dear Venetian fame. Too much
 Of it! Let us deter, exampling him;
 Though hearts be crushed, mine own as well.

Doge.

His youth

I watched—his father's friend—he promised well.
 Alas! that promises should thus embrangle.

Moro. The promisee hath given good, so stands
 The case. The promiser, with oath, hath sealed.
 His part we now affirm. Massaccio, receive
 This palace, its owner's wealth, his wide possessions.
 Signor Vitalis, if that were all, 'twere well.
 But God still purposes; he proves your guilt.
 Black-hearted deeds deserve black consequence;
 The dungeon's keep for him who raised no hand
 To serve his stricken saviour. Now pray God's mercy
 That life-long gloom may free from grim hereafter.
 We have said our heavy say.

Paulina.

But I not mine.

And hearken, most noble Signors. This house has held
 Too long a record, too brave a score, 'tis time
 Some flaw was picked and jealousy has searched.

[*She bursts into tears, then looks wildly round.*]

Of what avail is woman's weapon, or tears
 Or argument? when stony looks surround.

Vitalis. Then cease, then cease, Paulina, nor waste a tear
 On me. A shadow now I pass from thee;
 A form too dim for memory's retainment.
 Divorce what has dissolved in dark, then choose
 'Mid real things a worthier mate. 'Tis pity
 Servia's king has been thus feverish,
 Enmeshed himself in married state, undreaming
 His erstwhile love would find her freedom.

Paulina. [*Drawing close to him.*]

Freedom

Apart from thee and Venice—apart from thee;
Nor matters Venice; nor matter sun, nor moon,
Nor stars, nor anything.—Freedom apart!
Then tyranny and tideless death. I choose
The dungeon's pulsing gloom, to press 'gainst thee
With whispered fears, to feel thine arms around,
In turn to kiss thy fancied ills away,
As might a mother cuddling her youngest born,
Or softly stroke more lasting hurt till love
Wins mastery. Ay dungeon's gloom, it glows
With light and we'll rekindle, if fires should dim.

Vitalis. Paulina, frown! cease honeyed words. O loose
This sweet embrace. It makes the harder. Canst thou
Not shudder back as from some leprous touch?
Thy silent scorn or blare of shrilled abuse
Would solace more, for then I'd rest assured
The injuries I have forced on thee, were not
Beyond time's physicing.

Doge.

O wrongful life;

Whose missiles torture innocence as guilt
And oft more poignantly.

Moro.

I wish an end

To this most painful scene. Signora, come,
Come—God pities you. His help awaits.

Paulina. Awaits? It is given. It paints with glowing brush
That dark and drear recess; whose midnight chill
Envelops now. It shows the way! Are there
No officers, with clanking tread, to walk
Beside us, to tell the mob what fate is doled
The young Vitalis; whose house has generous record?

Moro. [*Addressing an attendant.*] Use force, but tenderly.

[*The Attendant seeks to pull her from Vitalis*]

Paulina. [*Struggling.*] O strength of some
Wild beast at bay to rend and tear. *Vitalis*,
Help!

Moro. If such her mood more churlish means.

Paulina. O God, this wrenching pain! which way to turn?
And now the Spirit speaks—I hear the voice.
Most noble Signors, you held me innocent;
Then learn: it was I, who hedged *Vitalis* in;
He wished compliance; but I refused. A house,
I thought, was made of memories and we
A living part; who else could read its stories?
Must they fall heedlessly on stranger-ears
Or wake a mocking note? O sacred tales,
That our forbears have writ, must ye unroll
With none who love to prize your inner meaning,
With none who love to add a further scroll?
To so refuse t'would be a villainy
That is triple dyed with juice from noxious weed;
Ingratitude to footsteps, whose echo still
Resounds; to those we follow with; again
To those light patterings and airy bursts
Of laughter the future flings before. A vile,
Inhuman treachery that pales to white
The natural wish to prick this peasant's most
Unthinkable, most foolish blown of bubbles.
And thus I moved *Vitalis*.

Doge.
Us all.

And thus she moves

A Councillor. And moves to tears.

Marco. [*After a pause.*]

And I can vouch;

Although her pleadings rose from innocence,
Were aimed 'gainst love of roguish change;
They bore such weight of sobs and sweet reminders,
An honest heart was forced to soothe, until
Its purpose vanished. And which of you in like
Dilemma would grasp the point of duty's horn?
So lend your thought, most noble Signors, lend
The frailty that tempers each, incline to woman's
Fevered plaint, till smiles come trembling back
To chase the frown from fair Paulina's face.

Doge. Could love as hers be lavished so on what is
All grimed at core? Such love encompasses,
Its flame has scorched the judgment given, has jagged
And scaled its edge, has forced our hands from it,
Has weakened me.

Moro.

But must not contravene

Our strict Venetian law.

A Councillor.

Nor need infringe,

If fairness be invoked and one that is fair
Has pleaded well. Our hostess, poor lady, much
Abused, much pitied, has urged her claim to crime
And punishment, and we, being men, aware
That love dictates, would be foresworn to sense
Of chivalry, if we discredited.
And so this said poor lady asks her part,
Demands her part and who denies the whole
Is greater? thence must her share be taken, thus
The whole is lessened—a laxer penalty.

Moro. Our learned friend has used his heart to purpose,
If not his subtle brain; approval nods,
The world desires and we are nothing loath.
So hearken! Signor Vitalis, an exile's fate
Is yours, your wife to suage.

Marco.
That envy.

And some, the poorer,

Massaccio. [*Tossing a coin.*] Heads or tails—who loses?

Paulina. Vitalis;
The mountain-peaks are calling us.

Vitalis. And can
Their voices reach?

Paulina. They have! look up! Vitalis.

Vitalis. Paulina! [*With head erect, his arm supporting her, they move toward the gate.*]

Massaccio. Heads or tails, who loses? but I
Have won the gold that buys.

Fina. [*In a wheedling voice.*] Massaccio!

Massaccio. Well.

Fina. More warmth, Massaccio.

Massaccio. [*Pointing to the palace.*] In marble halls, come
pipe,
My bird! the cage awaits.

ST. URSULA

CHARACTERS.

Deonatus,	<i>King of West Britain.</i>
Ursula,	<i>His Daughter.</i>
Vinnosa,	<i>Her Cousin.</i>
Cordula, } Saula, } Martha, }	<i>Attendant Maidens.</i>
Lubin,	<i>In love with Cordula.</i>
Ambassador,	<i>A Frisian.</i>
Conon,	<i>A Frisian Prince.</i>
Iwan,	<i>A Bishop.</i>
Herald.	
Angel.	
Konrad, } Karl, }	<i>Citizens of Cologne.</i>
Attila,	<i>King of the Huns.</i>
Onzel,	<i>Captain of his Guards.</i>
Dwarf.	

Maidens, Courtiers, Attendants, Archers, Guards.

Time: The Middle of the Fifth Century.

Place: Partly in Britain and partly in Rhineland.

ST. URSULA

ACT I.

Scene.—The great hall in the palace of King Deonatus. The walls are hung with armour and horse-trappings and shields of gold and enamelled blue. Couches are covered with rare skins, and woven curtains hang in the doorways. There are several golden harps and cauldrons of iron and long tables. Also the chair of state. The floor is strewn with rushes.

Enter Cordula with a basket of flowers. While arranging them in a vase she takes up a primrose. Enter Lubin, unperceived, and not at first noticing Cordula.

Cordula. [Reflectively.] Ah, this primrose—so sedate!
as are

My friends; but I——

Lubin.
Alone?

Cordula! little heart!

Cordula. [Placing her hand on her heart.] Ay, little heart;
but theirs are great,
As welkin's crystal height, as seas that round
Life's wonderment; while mine is a heedless speck
That flutters, canary-wise, when Lubin speaks.

Lubin. Let him be guardian then to tame with sweet
Embrace, with faltering word. O little heart,
That throbs humanity, make room for me.

Cordula. You crowd its space. Alas! for heavenly things.

Lubin. They vision now, a rosy mist, the soft
Allure of spring, and all its praise.

Cordula.

And prayer?

Lubin. These begging arms, beseeching eyes? Cordula,
Come! [*As he takes her in his arms, the vase is upset, unnoticed
by either.*]

Cordula. If bliss, that is tasted thus, could last.
[*They sit together on one of the couches.*]

Lubin. Why question? Has fame not tuned the harp that
hums
The past in our ancestral halls? do spears
Not glint and arrows flash, when song aspires
Anew to battle cry? Cordula, once,
In soulful contest, the bards, who champion
Your proud forbears and mine, made music such
Great chiefs grew envious, the judge distraught;
Vibrating strings and voice regathered the din
And clash of war, the hero's stroke; until
Ecstatic heights were reached, none knew which deed,
Which song had triumphed; applause was drawn from those;
Who fain had showered abuse. "Two golden cups";
They cried, "of like and rare design. Each singer
Melts the heart, each singer cleaves the sky!"
Cordula, love, supreme in records past,
Our fortunes meet where fields adjoin; our fathers
Are leagued with friendship's kiss; our mighty herds
The silver-handed Lud could scarcely choose

Between. So circumstanced, with favour strewn,
Shall we then thorn the lily stem or foul
The rose's fragrant heart?

Cordelia. [*Gently.*] No, no.

Lubin. The King
Will praise this morning's work, our families,
The future smiles its benison. Have trust
Where paths unwind 'mid flowers for happy culling.

Cordula. And Ursula?

Lubin. Who treads the clouds; can she,
Through visioning, forbid?

Cordula. I sadly fear;
Though should be pleased to count my wayward self
Among her peerless band of followers.

Lubin. The fairest! the sweetest! and mine. [*Kissing her.*]
Nor will I share
The smallest part of this soft, yielding form
With maiden friends or Princess Ursula
Or gods above,—the gods themselves demand it.
Break loose from mystic thralldom; life awaits.

Cordula. Awaits—I know not; your words have dizzied
me,
Their force disturbs; but I, but I myself
Will seek to steady—a midway course, with Lubin
And Ursula, two guiding stars.

Lubin. First, so much is gained! if there be aught
In Love's avowal, and all fair things do float

Therein, 'twill soon be Lubin—sun, moon and stars,
The universe in one five-lettered word.

Cordula. "Lubin"! I fight its magic, yet must succumb.

Lubin. My sweetheart! [*Sounds are heard from without.*]

Cordula. But haste! discovery! a maid
So placed——

Lubin. [*Tearing himself from her.*] Till later then—and
then— [*Exit with a reassuring look.*]

Cordula. Had I
Assurance thus, this breath of joy would fan
To flame, alas! it fails me now, they come.

[*Enter Ursula, Vinnosa, Saula, Martha and six other maidens with flower-baskets only partly filled.*]

Vinnosa. Cordula! Cordula! and flowers all scattered
round,
As though some bacchanalian feast had spent
Itself—demureness fled—this vase upset.

Cordula. O talk not so of foolish hap.

Vinnosa. As I
Admit; but hap decries the vigilance
That is ours to prove in little things as big.

Ursula. And big this morning's purpose, God prospers us.

Cordula. [*Stooping to pick up her flowers.*] Both are as-
sured; alas! not I.

Martha. [*Placing her flowers in a vase.*] Our flowers
Are thirsting too and small their show.

Paula.

If we

Have failed in gathering, our high uplift
Now pardons us. The Holy Altars though
Received their wonted bloom, the fairest, most fragrant,
Agape with dawn's renewal; and now we seek
Ourselves the happiness that is truly stored
Within their petaled grasp. O ruddy joy!
The bliss that streams from lofty source! may we,
In our abasement, find as they.

Ursula. [*Sitting on a couch and handing her basket to one of the maidens.*] Our clasp is
More sure! more lasting! Dear friends, let us await
The King, acquaint him with our purpose, each one
Of us in bright and rapturous accord.
Cordula, though, had slipped apart; has she
Approved with us?

Cordula. The sunshine dazzled me,
I sought the cool; but still a faintness clings.

Ursula. That clears your fault, come rest! while Martha
clears
Its evidence; poor child! she suffers though.
Her eyes are moist, her little face all screwed
With grief. [*Drawing Cordula down beside her.*]

Cordula. O touch me not and yet your touch
Brings comforting. Dear Princess Ursula,
Tell me your purport now, while I lie close
Beside, draw courage from your tender glance.

Ursula. And scarcely mine, a thought that has upwelled
From each, although insistant visioning
Had led me first to seek unburdenment.
While life has pampered us, there is without
This court's confine, the Serpent's hoary trail

Of sin and viciousness—atrocities
Whose heavy dark has never dimmed our young,
Untutored minds—we but surmise; yet we
Ourselves have felt the surge that many wars
Have blown; and now, at peace, there is a rampant
Restlessness that chooses vent in dance,
In wild carousal and most unseemly dress.
The churches stay untenanted, one swears
By gods foresworn; their ancient rites revived,
A savage mimicry, that sweeps aside
Or Christian privilege or awesome fear
Of that stupendous God; whose searching eye
Will pierce the veil weak conscience cowers beneath.

Cordula. O Princess, once, as some great harvest moon,
Though fainter caught and shorn of friendliness,
I saw that red, avenging eye loom forth,
Made visible through childish fault. It glowed
With majesty, a stern and ruthless force:
'Twas Truth inflexible, it plunged the night
In heavier gloom and shed accusing rays
That chilled and tore the heart; until loud shrieks
Brought human hands to pet and warm and comfort;
A brazen lamp to blur supernal glow.

Vinnosa. Well may your eyes be closed and pallor come,
Audacious words!

Ursula. She means them not,—some error—
There followed remorse and dread, most bitter potions
From God's dispensary. Shall we subject
Ourselves to this sad healing? remember too,
The scars, or shall we live, so wrapt about
With righteousness, that nought can trouble us,
And nought offend? We purpose it. Heed how!
With wondrous thought, untouched by earth or self,
To dwell apart from human ties.

Cordula.

And marriage?

Vinnosa. Accept man-tyranny, then death to high
Emprise.*Cordula.* But he might torch the way.*Saula.*

Are there

Not gospel-words and angel-guidance?

Martha.

As frail

As we, our brother Man; nor worse, nor better.

Ursula. Our brother Man—for him our dearest wish,
Our faith, our prayer.*Cordula.*

I once had faith, a child

Imbued with Christian lore, would test its merit.
Behind our house there lies a hillock, greened
With trees well-conned and known, and churlishly
It veils the far beyond, the rosy sun's
Last glimpse of us; the vale, where tremulous moonbeams
Glint the dance, that wakes the slumbering fay.
I sunk my soul, my strength, my wayward fancy,
Hands clenched, the everything that is me, in most
Determined faith to move that stubborn hill;
But not one finger's length 'twould budge.

Ursula.

And wiser

Than that small maid; who pitted self against
Titanic law; who sought in wanton play
To tease a pleasant mount; whose tangled nooks
Had often nestled her, allured her steps
Where thickest, sweetest brambleberries grow,
Our one-time picnic ground! Ungrateful maid.
But hark! are there not sounds without?

Cordula.

There is

A noise that comes, a cheeriness! the King
Returns from chase, dismounting men make boast
Of prowess; while nosing dogs assert themselves.
And now the thud of game that is dropped for close
And proud inspection! 'Twill pleasure all; but most
The King; who loves success; who dearly loves
His radiant daughter, would have her wisely wed.

Ursula. Vain words and worse, displeasing me.

[*Enter King Deonatus, unperceived.*]

Cordula. [*Rising.*]

But think;

There come wee baby hands to clutch at his,
Wide-eyed surprise to follow him, and then
The dawning boyhood, a noble princeling, first
In wrestling match and feats of hard endurance.
The morning passes, appears a kingly figure;
Versed in arts of peace and arts of war,
Grim of purpose, calm with noonday strength;
His stalwart manhood sings his mother's beauty,
Shifts the bleak of tristful age, that else
Might trouble sore an heirless king. O cruel
And merciless, forbidding this.

Deonatus. [*Coming forward.*]

And has

The fair Cordula tapped the future? drawn
This pleasantness for me? And who'd gainsay?

All [*Turning with surprise and making obeisance.*] The
King!

Ursula. [*In a low voice, answering Deonatus.*] Who
reigns above.

Cordula. [*Slipping into the background where she drops
on a bench.*] I am abashed.

Deonatus. A women's Council, so it seems. They take
Much on themselves these days.

Vinnosa. Your pardon, Uncle,
For our intrusion here. We have a purpose.

[*Deonatus seats himself at one of the tables. Martha
and others wait on him.*]

Deonatus. Most prettily announced, but first some mead
And oaten cakes to charm a listening mood.
I drink to willing service, to beauteous forms;
No other court is favoured thus. The chase
Much pleased me, my skill deserts me not:
Our bards will strengthen it, lest peaceful days
Unravel the gilded threads that many wars
Have strung.

Ursula. O Father, talk not so of war.

Deonatus. Your mother's words.

Ursula. That echo woman's thought,
And now her voice.

Deonatus. A moment to sober it:
Martha, whose household skill befriends us all,
We beg your vigilance; have care the meats
Are salted well, that none may spoil, so give
A shiftless lead to slaves and hirelings; yet
'Tis strange, that lapse and foible, as flagrant vice,
Do sift from courts polluting far; while thrift
And modest virtue fail the task; or breed
Contempt and hateful sneers.

[*Exit Martha.*]

Ursula. If vice beglamours,
Lend to virtue's self, then see it spread:

Great actions glow with warmth, and mine are chilled.
 A pampered life, each wish fulfilled, the joy
 Of giving, for much we have—and trusted friends.
 Had ever maid such fair array of charmers
 As these sweet damozels, that cling about
 In harmony of thought? and here we are
 To supplicate. O Father! listen now.

Deonatus. Divulge the matter.

Ursula. My Mother often spoke
 Of holy martyrs, of Egypt's anchorites,
 And now in Southern Gaul, men vow their lives
 To Christ, disdaining earthly claim; so we
 Would spouse ourselves in mystic praise with Him
 Forever! in rapturous amaze! haw pale
 A thing beside is that brief hectic glow
 That flickers and dims with wedlock's harsh assault.

Deonatus. My Ursula, those words displease, and you
 The child of happiness, of fervent love
 Till death—and memory bespeaks it now—
 Give pause, nor seek to smirch the marriage vow;
 Whose chimes have rung this sweet perfection, ay,
 This tender flower that breathes revolt, and I
 Surmise the cause, Vinnosa here, our niece;
 Who prates of woman's part, her new assumption
 Would pit herself 'gainst man. To prize her sex
 Aloft, his ills and failings sooth must serve
 As leverage, and thus she hauls at them;
 Till we be ogres grown or sinful wastrels.
 Horns and tail for us; but feathered wings
 To float her virtues far; and we have listened
 As at the court buffoon; whose nonsense flows
 From serious lips. Vinnosa, niece, curtail
 Your speech or feel a king's disoleasure.

Ursula. Go, Cousin, Sister-friends, a daughter's art
Must wind about this else so tyrant king.

[*Exeunt Vinnosa, Saula and other maidens. Cordula, lost in thought, stays partially hidden.*]

Deonatus. Come, wheedling words and courtier-acts; we
are
Prepared: speak on!

Ursula. The simple words that love
Dictates.—Ills and disillusionment—
War's aftermath—who seeks to cure? A few
Now rage and sputter wrath.—These maids and I
Would search God's ear through prayer and abstinence,
Would so uplift ourselves to speed our bolt,
That He must harken, show His friendliness;
Till grace becomes our portion here, our pleasure.
The road illumed by us, how many soon
Will tread, nor thought of marriage vows.

Deonatus. A world
Unmarried—a vacant world—what happens then?

Ursula. And vacant lives this very day.

Deonatus. A vision!
A noble scheme! we are not deaf to such.
For others though to mould its course: Vinnosa,
Our niece, stern-visaged! not—not you, my child,
My tender blossom; for you some warrior prince,
Some gracious lord; whose stalwart frame gives shelter;
Whose softening eyes assure.

Ursula. O Father, a King,
A Prince has questioned me, the very One,
And I, His bride, rejoice, and so my friends.

Then tempt us not with lesser worth. O Father,
My Mother pleads for me, her erstwhile teaching,
Her silent presence.

Deonatus. If ghosts be summoned thus,
It is your eyes reflecting hers. I feel,
It seems, a sobbing breath. Go Ursula,
Nor conjure thought, distressing me.

Ursula. He weakens.
Thanks, dear Father!

Deonatus. Tempter, go! our promise—
To weigh, consider.

Ursula. And that may tether me.
No, Father, no, or rather "yes," a strong
Emphatic "Yes, my Ursula," and you,
The King, are saved much thought.

Deonatus. Then God protect!
Who comes? [*Enter Lubin.*]

Lubin. Your pardon, Sire?

Deonatus. What is it?

Lubin. A ship,
That fast approaches, has neared our harbour's mouth.
It is a royal bark.

Deonatus. [*Rising.*] Go question her.
Come, Ursula.

[*Exit Deonatus and Ursula.*]

Lubin. Cordula, fairest maid,
Alone! Twice-blessed morn!

Cordula. That is crookt with woe,
For Princess Ursula demands her claim;
Not one of us may wed.

Lubin. Cordula weeps,
So weeping, rivers forth my claim—but I—
But I must hasten—yet leave one kiss with her;
That promises eternal troth: remember— [Exit.]

Cordula. [Looking after him.] Poor little heart that is
torn this way and that;
Yet would surrender.

ST. URSULA

ACT II.

Scene.—The same.

Enter Lubin with the Frisian Ambassador and Conon disguised as his Assistant, followed by Attendants with rich gifts.

Lubin. And so, as Love's ambassadors, you come,
With gifts to tempt the Princess Ursula;
Whose mind is stored with fairer wealth, thus say
Her satellites; whose spirit soars above.
Then take more subtle means for much depends
Upon your mission's furtherance, 'twould help
Mine own, a lesser one; but dearer far
To me.

Ambassador. There is no wiser councillor
Than one, whose interest treads the self-same path.
Speak on! We follow.

Lubin. Then lend your Prince some traits
Of gentleness, he sends as suppliant,
Herself to lavish Christian truth. His soul

Is as a virgin field that is ploughed with doubt.
That wakes to usefulness, if she but stoop
To scatter golden seed. His heathen gods
Are shorn of might, let hers give surer prop.

Ambassador. Insult our gods, my Lord; but not our
Prince;

A worthy youth; who holds his warriors
In leash as they their thunderbolts; but he is
More swift to act and we to ravage.

Conon.
Its mutterings?

War?

Ambassador. If such our Prince as this
Mild Briton paints, then let some craven cur
Be asked to lick and paw his messages;
Nor so demean a free-born earl, that boasts
His Frisian strength.

Conon. Advice was tendered you,
My noble Lord, encouraged by yourself:
If not approved, why then, whose fault? Have care
Lest vagrant sparks do gather fire, so spoil
Your Prince's chance. Love's errand is our task
Today—a pretty one! if humbleness
Best serve, so let it serve.

Ambassador. I stand rebuked.
Will ask this Briton's pardon, not—I must
Confess—to pleasure self.

Lubin. I like the youth,
His friendliness; so will not quarrel with one
Whose age must treble mine; nor have I power.
There is no time.

[*Enter Herald.*]

Herald. The King! he comes to greet
The envoys of his Frisian Majesty,
Regrets his tardiness. The King!

[Enter Deonatus, Iwan, Courtiers and Attendants. After greeting the Ambassador, Deonatus is led to the chair of state. All group about him.]

Deonatus. *[Addressing the Ambassador and Conon.]* My
Lords,
Your ships in touching here, have brought us slaves;
Fair, honest trafficking! We know your captains,
Your traders, strong, sea-faring men as those
We breed on British soil, and now would know
Your high-born selves, your mission here; how does
Fair Frisia's King? What is his pleasure?

Ambassador. To clasp
West Britain's hand through yours, Royal Sir. His health
Is as a Frisian king's should be, whose arm
Forefends all watchful foes, whose strength prevails.

Deonatus. *[Haughtily.]* His purpose?

Ambassador. He sends these gifts, your kind acceptance
Would satisfy.

[Attendants bring forward gifts.]

Deonatus. *[Examining gifts.]* What glitterings of wealth
To buy the love of Britain's king—armlets,
Corselets, collars with starry gems to dazzle
Against their firmament of ruddy gold.
A priceless heap! and yet, there is price; what wills
Your King of us?

Ambassador. The hand of brotherhood.

Deonatus. No more?

Ambassador. His own hand outstretches, he throws his
egis,
Would join his hopes with yours—the link your daughter,
The beauteous Princess Ursula; whose fame
The seas have wafted us. Her loveliness
And modesty have lost no whit through telling.
Our Prince, the sweet-voiced Conon, longs for her;
His Father sends to fetch her; the gods give sanction,
Unless the light-haired Moon; who sulks behind
The banking clouds, distraught with jealous pang:
She hears the mystic songs, that lovers weave,
The runes of Ursula.

Deonatus. And I refuse
This mockery. Our fairest prize, our daughter,
To mate with heathendom. Take back these gewgaws,
Your Judas-kiss.

Ambassador. Then loose the ribald songs
Of war, for Western cliffs will swelter blood
As Kentish lealands.—Fiercely, sharply press
The warriors, javelin-hail and arrow-flight;
So let the lean wolf fatten now and eagles,
Blar-eyed, befeast themselves with gore; your wives,
Your daughters, ay, the Princess Ursula,
Will lisp the whine of slavery, will fawn
And cower. Frisians, Angles, Saxons, Jutes,
Who injures one, entangles all, dark clouds
Descending.

Conon. Stay, my Lord, this brewing talk;
Else clouds in verity descend, and you
Be swamped deserting thus your Prince's cause.
A friendly truce! Give Britain's King more time.
Let him consider.

Deonatus. The trumpetings of war
 Have shaken thought. Our battle-cries will shrill
 Above the stranger's noisy tongue. Our bows
 Are strung, our archers watch the sea; whose foam
 Will curdle round despairing shrieks, will froth
 The russet hues of blood; till surging wan
 Respond with chill of death's forgetfulness.

Conon. Great King, forbear! lest words upheave beyond
 Your ken, our power to stave, the war-dirge float
 From flood to land and brooding seamews whiten,
 Where now brave archers watch.

Deonatus. I have no fear.

Conon. And yet there is argument, a fairer purpose.
 Our mission——

Deonatus. I listen not.

Iwan. O Sir, let age
 Be privileged to speak, and I am old
 In God's good service here. Have you forgot
 Your Christian tutelage? your learning? thus
 To urge the joyless clash of arms? Shall we
 Let savage runes incite to mirthless death,
 When hymns of peace might solace us? No! no!
 And no! the Church forbids and listen! there may
 Be smoother paths. Give heed, your Frisian Lordships,
 Maids in Britain are of angel-build,
 Each one outrivalling her fairest friend:
 Who wins the stranger's eye may not—may not
 Be Princess Ursula.

Conon. Go fetch these flowers
 That cluster round, the rose that centres them,
 Nor let us know by dress or privilege

Of place which one be she; whose lustrous worth
 Impresses thus our Prince. I pledge his honour,
 Our mission's dear success on her, I choose.
 Pray send for her, her maiden train.

Deonatus. Shall we
 Be ordered thus—West Britain's King?

Iwan. Nay, Highness,
 Send for her, instruct as this young lord
 Desires; the Lord, who ruleth all, will cherish,
 Will so augment a lesser star, 'twill blind
 The stranger's choice.

Deonatus. Lord Lubin, go—and warn.

Lubin [*Aside.*] And warn Cordula—if she were chosen—
[*Exit.*]

Conon. He speaks
 Of lesser stars,—the skies do stream with them.
 Of more majestic size, eleven thousand—
 Eleven thousand shining orbs—if this
 Great hall could so contain them, each goddess-light
 In sumptuous maiden-form, my glancing eye
 Would pierce amid the gay, effulgent throng;
 Would reach at last the fair moon-maid, and thus
 Our prince now pictures her.

Deonatus. And thus myself.
 I like this youth—his purpose steals within;
 Though reason cries against it.

Iwan. If he were prince,
 And Christ would shepherd him—vain human prompting;
 God decrees—His will be done.

[*Enter Lubin ushering Vinnosa, and other maidens,
 amongst whom are Cordula, Saula, Martha and Ursula.*]

Vinnosa.
 Royal Uncle, with curious thought; are we
 Still children, bidden so?

We come,

Deonatus. Your silence! Stand
 You there! no slightest stir, nor whispered hint.

Conon. She slips behind; whose dress is iris-hued;
 Her eyes reflect it.

Lubin. Cordula, no! alas
 The charm that flickers from those pouting lips;
 She laughs and all is lost.

Cordula. I tremble though.

Conon. [*Addressing Lubin.*] Console the maid. Your
 choice mayhap; our Prince
 Still wonders—[*Noticing Saula.*] Stay! there is one beside her,
 whose eyes
 Look through and through, they tempt the soul's response,
 And yet her form is too fragile; dowered with wings,
 She'd upwards fly. [*Glimpsing Martha.*] But here, who plies
 her needle,
 Industrious, most unconcerned, less nymph-like,
 True! more of this earth, would straight its tangle,
 A fitting helpmate—still a something lacks.
 O puzzlement! it it beyond my ken?
 Why no, she is there, the sweet dream-maid, the night's
 Soft glory, the morn's bright visioning, and all
 That is pure, that is worshipful, absorbing them.
 O Princess, give me your favour. [*Kneeling before her.*]

Ursula.
 Delusion! who speaks?

Ill-sorted words!

Conon. One crazed with love—or is
As deputy. His Prince looks heavenward,
When he would sue for wedded bliss. Give answer,
Sweet Princess, bless our Frisian lands.
As future Queen, your cheering light will fling
Its beams afar.

Ursula. Are you a Christian?

Conan. [*Rising.*] No,
But will become; we have our Prince's word
That he will study this new, strange report
Of simpler gods, will give his countenance;
And more, we have our colonies on isles
That need the touch of womanfolk, for men
Predominate. Eleven thousand I
Have said, referring then to stars, and still
Of stars I speak, of maids, who shed their lustre.
Eleven thousand Frisian homes—what waste
Of surplus womanhood if these be left
Untenanted. O Princess! kind, they say,
And wishful of high deed, let pity's dew
Besprinkle; give our court, our solitudes
Your sweet uplift, your tenderness.

Ursula. I am
Betrothed.

Ambassador. His title then? or king or thane,
We prove our Prince's claim, his merit soars
Alove.

Ursula. Then must it topple heaven's height.
My Spouse will judge the quick and dead, His gifts
To me are suffering and sacrifice;
But peace of mind; what man can give as much?

Ambassador. [*Addressing Conon.*] My Lord, your pleas
but end in shifting sand.

Let me uphold with flint that challenges. [*Addressing
Ursula.*]

High-born, most lovely bloom on British soil,
We gather graciously, so would your beauty,
Your virtue shine in friendly setting. If—
And here is our vengeful threat—if obstinate,
With thorny thrust, we tear, uppull, to fling
Aside; the kingdom's hearth made desolate.
I hear the clash of foreign shields. that drown
The prayerful cries, the moans of terror.

Conon. [*Seeking to support Ursula.*]
My Lord, the Princess shudders back.

No more,

Deonatus.

Unarm

And leave my daughter's side, vile heathen brute,
No whit less low than he; who fouls the air
With noisy insolence. Away with both.

Ursula. O Father, no; let calm assuage, the calm
Of our unworthiness and God's high purpose.
Our ancestors were heathens once, why pride
We now, unless His will be done on earth;
Let us discover—then the going is straight:
Those holy women, Esther and Judith, searched
Their way through prayer and fast, thus saved themselves,
Their people. Can I, who lisp but infant-phrase
Compared with them, so force the rifting clouds
That light will deluge through? O angel host,
Give me the utterance to move the Strength
That lies beyond. Dear Father, listen now:
The heavenly Spouse will word for us dismissal
To these presumptuous men. Let us retire,
Let them restrain themselves, until the time

That answer sends them forth, or pleased or grieved,
It is God who bears the onus, not His servants.

Iwan. O King, the soul of ancient days hath spoken,
Though garbed in woman's form, though wearing youth's
Unlettered face. The Princess disprinces now
Our age and sex: give her the governance.
She is your heir, she proves herself God's servant.

Deonatus. If her sweet face reflects a saintly ardour,
She is princess too, so holds our honour—good,
We leave it there—the chase much wearied us,
Or this contentious talk, for passions stirred
Do punish more than pleasantry, or toil,
Or august sport. My Lords, we prosper you,
Our treasured guests, till quarrels revoke or peace
Renews the pact with cooing grace, though we
Be loath to further it.

Ambassador. [*Angrily.*] And we!

Conon. [*Restraining him.*]
The King commands, and we, his servitors,
Submit, our hearts aglow with fealty.
Doth he not father her? whose wakefulness
And dreams we would impress with our—with our
Young Prince's homage, his tenderest regard.

Stay, stay!

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene II.—A bedchamber, whose only light radiates from a majestic Angel-form. The glow falls on Ursula's enraptured face. She is kneeling in a loose, white garment.

Ursula. Eleven thousand, thou hast said? and we
Must sail the seas, must buttress life with prayer;
Until the vengeful hour, three Roman years
From now?

Angel. And God hath said, I speak His word.
Wake Ursula, for sainthood gleams afar. [*Fading.*]

Ursula. Bright Spirit! stay! nor fade from anguished eyes
Until that drear, that spousal date be wiped
From time's account; all else is privilege.

Angel. [*Brightening.*] And wilt thou choose the thorns
that deck? when God
Delivers them. O stubborn one, accept
Each thorn that is offered thee, so weave the crown
Of martyrdom. [*Slowly fades away.*]

Ursula. [*Clasping her hands.*] O precious word! O hope
That blasts the world, its tentacles!—but all
Is dim, assurance dies.—A cunning dream
Would conjure him. Sweet-voiced Deliverer!
No answer—the mocking dark doth press—I call!

Angel. [*Appearing.*] St. Ursula, do doubts assail thus
soon?
Hast thou not seen and heard? [*Softly fades away.*]

Ursula. In very substance.
O holy light, that now portrays within,
Pray temper me with bright, celestial hue,
That draws its hardening grace from rosy streams
Of sacrifice. The future tolls my way

With no uncertain voice; in reverence
I walk, nor seek to pry: three years are mapped,
And who, with lesser light, doth know beyond
The pall of one dark night?

Scene III.—The same as Scene I.

Enter Deonatus, leaning on Conan's arm, accompanied by Lubin.

Deonatus. A princeling then! the Frisian heir! the lover!
Young man, it much behoooves the truth, that you
Have slipped from your astute disguise, so raised
Yourself to favour. The King, your Father, is stern,
You say, desires excuse to ravage here—
If Ursula discourage you, why then—
The tempest breaks—and so, dilemma stays.

Conon. My Mother, who alone could soften him,
Was Grecian, Christian too; although foresworn
To please her lord; yet crumbs have fallen. He,
As age creeps on, now gathers them, considers—
His mind is broad and subtle. But hark! one comes.
I feel her presence near—there is no sound—
A rustling though.

[*Enter Ursula, Vinnosa and Cordula.*]

Deonatus. [*Seating himself.*] She comes with unseeing
eyes,
Her hair in sweet dishevelment, her dress
Ungirdled. Haste, my Lords, your presence else

Might startle her. [*Addressing Conon.*] Fear not, your secret
 goes

No further.

[*Conon and Lubin retire behind a curtain.*]

Ursula. Dear, my Lord and Father, I
 Am now God's vessel. I do brim to tell
 What lies within.

Deonatus.

Then speak, my child.

Ursula.

Last night

A vision came, and all that once was storm-tossed
 Sank to calm: an Angel counselled me.

Deonatus. And are you sure?

Ursula.

As sure as high-tide beats

Upon our rock; as low-tide laps the cove;
 As robber-night doth steal the tints of day;
 As dawn doth rescue them with added jewel;
 As Adam fell through wayward Eve's transgression;
 As now it is woman's part to raise and save.

Deonatus. Ursula! your own conceit.

Ursula.

No. no.

The angel spoke; he must have hovered near
 Invisible, and caught suggestive words.
 Eleven thousand! so the number tallies—

[*She sinks in thought.*]

Deonatus. And why this silence? proceed—we listen.

Ursula.

Each word

The Angel spoke is sere within. There came
 A blinding light that hazed to softness; then,
 Absorbant of all majesty, benign

With wondrous grace, there stood the Visitant;
 And I, abashed, fell hushed to earth, yet knelt
 Imploringly. In tones melodious,
 The High-celestial One unburdened thus:
 "From mighty Presence rushed, I come to soothe;
 Thy fervency hath arrowed straight, thy prayers
 Have sung their way to God's acceptance; He
 Now welcomes thee with joyous gift: assurance,
 The power to serve His Kingdom's need. His handmaid!
 Illustrious title! thou art privileged."
 And I but gasped my thanks, then touched my brow
 To earth, of that my flesh; to God this glory.
 Then came the sweet, vibrating notes: "Go seek
 Thy Father's aid, make known thy wants, eleven
 Fair-riding ships, and each of burthen such
 A thousand maids may nest therein; the sails
 They broider first with aves and pater nosters,
 Winging prayer to lull the hurricane,
 To woo the slothful breeze."

Deonatus. And thus it goes—
 Eleven ships—eleven thousand birdlings
 To twitter praise of God! is that your meaning?

Ursula. To so accost with sacrifice and prayer
 That sin be drawn from Britain's soil, as mist
 Dissolving.

Deonatus. Rich attainment!—Lesser thoughts
 Intrude: what force will wield the oars, will furl
 Or loose the sails? will search the heaving way
 Through waters wan and vast?

Ursula. If sailors learn,
 So we.

Deonatus. What follows then?

Ursula. Three Roman years
 From now, an end that mystifies: if honest,
 I must confess, a wastrel end, and yet
 The Angel spoke, let that suffice. Three years
 To con the tides and our own weaknesses,
 How best to buffet them—three years for him
 The heathen prince, to grapple with our truths,
 And then—

Conon. [*Advancing.*] And then, O Princess, speak!

Ursula. Alas
 The day! when Frisia's treacherous shore unfolds.

Conon. [*His hand on his heart.*] O heart, that beats the
 joyous day, keep still.
 I listen.

Ursula. There is no more; one word may be—
 Take back, my Lord, some priests; whose fervency
 Will serve your prince, will show his errors, teach
 Our faith and pave the way for holy rite
 Of bapbism.

Conon. And marriage vows?

Ursula. [*Returning his gaze.*] If, if—yet no.
 May he be hideous, of disposition
 Cruel, unjust; I will none of pleasantness.
 I seek—but wiser though unsaid, there is
 A far beyond.

Deonatus. She is in dreamy mood.
 Or tired with much incitement.

Ursula. A dizziness
 From fast and vigil.

Vinnona.
Come rest you now.

Come. Ursula, sweet cousin,

Ursula. But Father, your promise first:
Our ships! eleven splendid galleys.

Deonatus. First
As last, it saves much breath. Go, Ursula,
Be well assured.

Ursula. Then God will bless!
[*Exeunt Ursula, Vinnosa and Cordula.*]

Deonatus. Young Prince,
Three years of patience! age is swept o'er fast;
But youth must bide his time, and neither likes
The task.—A woman! how she masters us;
When she is fair and pleadful. Druid days
Were not so ill, our hearts are softer now;
And she, the wench, will pommel them, the priests,
The skies upholding—woe the present time
Or glad hosannas, those who follow us
May know, not I.—A truce to wearing thought.
Come, Conon, Prince, whose presence here hath tapped
This ferment; nay, 'twas ripe to river forth
Unhelped, I speak with fairness, come, a word!
[*Exeunt Deonatus and Conon. After
a pause enter Cordula, looking for a lost jewel.*]

Cordula. Unfortunate—my largest pearl! [*Stooping.*]
Why here—
And crushed—fit symbol of all goodly things,
For all is gnarled and spoilt. [*Seeing Lubin.*] O Lubin!

Lubin. Cordula,
Sweetheart! pouting lips, when love attends
With lightsome thought; why dancing songs should flow.

Cordula. O Lubin, no; but as this shattered pearl,
So must we trample love; whose sheen bewilders.

Lubin. Bedazzles now till notes have lost their semblance.
A gewgaw spoilt, what boots? Eternity
Is ours.

Cordula. I fear it much, if earthy love
Prevail.

Lubin. O call it names—this love of ours.
Impossible! Cordula, sweetheart, breathe
Its fragrance, feel its clasping warmth, enjoy,
Succumb to it—and fashion prompts, our Princess,
Stern, unyielding maid, has fallen prone.

Cordula. But not from weak adherence, no, a straight
For her most desperate: she flings aside
All thought of self for God ordains the trial.
With loathsome fear, I too must courtesy low
To some strange heathen lord; I shudder though.

Lubin. Perverse, unnatural maids.

Cordula. But first to serve
These many moons at sea.

Lubin. Moon-struck, mad-brained
Ere service starts! shall freak and whimsy ride
Unsrathed upon the rolling seas? a bubble—
Splatterings and froth and seaweed streaked
Through maidens' hair. Cordula, I pray you now.

Cordula. It is our given task, and such the winds
And waves must cower beneath.—O Lubin, dear!

Lubin. That "dear" now maddens me, a soft appeal
That slips through tutored words, that shows the heart,

The little heart; whose armoured crust restrains.
I pity it, nor force too soon: there is
A fair escape: go learn your seaman's trade;
We trust the King's most watchful guidance. I—
I steep myself in heathen lore, go forth
As Conon's servitor: a weather-cock,
I twist and turn, then point toward Christian truth.
As Conon, so his follower; as Princess,
So her maiden—marriage feasts or sad
Or gay—what matter!—ours will ring with joy,
Our hearts have spoken—three years, tempestuous
Or dull, they pass.

ST. URSULA

ACT III.

Scene.—Three years have elapsed: a terrace in front of the palace. Some rich carpets and a throne have been placed there. The gardens slope to cliffs with a view of the sea.

Enter Deonatus sadly, and Iwan, much elated.

Iwan. Most wonderful, most wonderful. I scarce
Can grasp it now; those white-winged ships, that rode
The mounting seas as swans that sense their way
Through ruffled brooks. Endowed with Heaven's power
They glode serenely straight, untrammelled by
The warring waves, that shot their frothy missiles
High and plunged, with clanging shield, each 'gainst
Its errant mate. The monstrous deep had loosed
Its wrath, the dragon mouthed with vengeful lust;
Yet steadily the ships on-came, or turned
Their course, manœuvering attack or sure
Defence, a stately dance, the calm of movement;
Whose guidance comes from studied art, whose prompting
From God Himself.

Deonatus. A wondrous sight! and yet
My saddened heart went drifting back. How oft

From yonder cliff these last, long years I watched,
 With troubled thought and gathering gloom, for some
 Untoward occasion, some awesome slip, and ever
 The glistening prows, the hallowed figure-heads,
 The prayer-wrought sails gave proud and swift denial.
 "Have faith: good women pray!" and now the parting:
 To touch and hear once more, a brief once more;
 And then the morrow, shadowy and dull.
 A plague on life and man's undoing; or woman's,
 Shall we say? Three years since her embrace
 Last gladdened me; but I have glimpsed her 'gainst
 The skies, have felt her presence near, and now
 This cruel disseverance,—she comes—she comes.
 Let us prepare; let grief subside 'neath trappings
 Of dignity and royal state,—she wished
 It so.—Three years ago we clung and wept.
 Ah then, emotion drained itself; but now
 It is prisoned.

[*Enter Herald with Attendants.*]

Herald. O gracious King, they disembark;
 Two white, slow-moving lines—like ghosts of warriors,
 So sure their tread.

Deonatus.

Assemble then our noblest.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

Herald. The Princess tarries yet to watch her maidens,
 Who pass in sweet review; then through their midst,
 A dazzling Queen, in simple pilgrim's garb,
 She comes.

Deonatus. Go hasten her—go hasten now.
 We are distraught.

[*Exit Herald. Enter Courtiers, and Attendants
 bearing rich garments. Deonatus is assisted to his throne*

while the others group themselves about. After a time enter maidens, all in white pilgrim-garb, in double file led by Saula and Martha. They stand at attention.

Enter Vinnosa walking through their midst.]

Vinnosa. [*Kneeling.*] Dear Uncle, Sovereign Lord,
I humbly bow.

Deonatus. [*Impatiently.*] And Ursula?

Vinnosa.

She begs.

Your kind forbearance. Uncle! pleasure her:
Let coldness mask the surging love that dwells
Within, I grant so much; but we must curb it.
If we are God's, then all is His; to Him
The glory! let earthly ties be wrenched and dulled
Till they subserve.

Deonatus.

Or till a young man's passion
Wakens them; but preachments tire, enough!
Where is Ursula?

Vinnosa. [*Moving aside.*] She comes, a glowing figure.
It is the last—the wondrous hour. She prays
Your royal calm, sustaining her.

[*Enter Ursula, walking slowly between the maidens.*]

Deonatus. [*Leaning forward.*] My daughter!

Ursula. Sweet untrammelled word, when it implies
God's daughter—yours to bless. I kneel imploring.

Deonatus. I bless and crave for you all good. May God
And Angels shower their love.—A father's heart
Asserts its power: mine own, my Ursula.

Ursula. O dearest Father, no; your promised word:
My frailty asks—a little flower in God's
Great garden I, be kind and merciful—

Deonatus. A little flower; whose fragrance blows above.
She conquers us, so be! we stem the tides
Of woe as ocean smooths its ruffled surf.
Submissiveness now gladdens her, then must
She smile, give evidence of worldly thought:
These garments strewn with jewels, her wedding robes.
See this! and this! and fairest, this! ay daughter,
God's—a king's as well! 'tis Britain's rôle
You play, so act the part, absorb the part,
Envisaging a nation's pride.

Ursula. That is
Of smallest consequence, nor mean I that
With rude intention. No! In humbleness
We take these garments, beauteous and rich.
Our thanks—if all be brides, we portion them,
This fairest one [*Lifting a scarlet robe.*] is mine, so please you,
Father,
Help to drape, so please you Father, one
Swift kiss, there is love within, God help us both! [*Exit.*]

Deonatus. [*Gazing after her.*] My Daughter.

[*Attendants throw rich garments over the shoulders of Vinnosa, Saula, Martha and other maidens as they slowly turn and solemnly file out after Ursula.*]

Scene II.—A clearing in a wood that opens on the road, skirting the Rhine, near Cologne. Konrad and Karl, in festive array, wearing leafy crowns are very excited. They are evidently on their way home after some all-night country festivity.

Konrad. Was ever sight more strange!

Karl. I never saw
Its like, nor dreamt.

Konrad. Our potions were most deep.
Think you it is aftermath of vile carousing?
Can beery draught so stir the sodden brain
That lightsome shafts do pierce? and Isis steers
Her lover-seeking course, her thousand names
Made visible—thus multiplies herself.

Karl. And passing, passes once again; I swear
Ten galleys passed, ten sumptuous ships—or more.
They dizzied me.

Konrad. Ay, pranky drunkenness
Hath conjured them: eleven was their count,
Revolving through the coily stuff that calves
Do share with us.

Karl. But do calves dream alike?
Or crocodiles? Saw you the boats high-pooed
With raw-hide sails and beamy bulwarks? Why friend,
They are British built, of solid oaken lengths,
They'd hold though all the ramming beaks of Rome's
Trireme's were thrust at them, her grappling irons
Would fail to cover.—Sturdily they pathed
Their watery course—no egg-shell chariots,
No silvery skiffs, whose airiness will climb
The clouds or weather through one's heaving mind,

The breath of gods, fair-textured as themselves.
But hark! there is music!

Voices without.

O joyousness that is ours to clasp,
We hald thee close and tenderly;
O fragile flower that angels grasp,
We praise our God, in praising thee.

Konrad. And silence now; but footsteps, hark! let us
Seek shelter; quick! these bowering shrubs will serve.
Hi, ho! what thorns! who searches truth must suffer.
So, so! if meaning is in this mystery;
We'll fathom it.

[*As Konrad and Karl hide enter Ursula, Cordula,
Vinnosa, Saula and Martha and other maidens.*]

Cordula. A blissful morn, and ours!

Ursula. And ours! who would have thought? yet God
directs!

And yonder town, that offers food for us.
O hasten, go, lest envious eyes be drawn
To your most rich attire; 'twere better left;—
But nathless go.

Cordula. And you, dear Queen?

Ursula.

I'll rest

In this sequestered spot, gain guidance how
And where to steer; though all is cheerful now,
The blustrous past has left its tremor: first,
Our fear of man's dominion, God's wish, we thought,
And then the tempest's stroke, fierce, crashing seas
And winds that shivered through, till flesh grew cold;
Till listlessness benumbed, such puppets we!
And all God's prompting care. He spoke! the blasts

That shackled us had saved from Frisia's shore,
 Had bulged our sails so purposely; that we,
 Unskilled, in waters strange, yet threaded through
 The sand-bar traps and isles; whose tentacles
 Were hid 'neath curls of mist.—The Rhenish stream,
 'Tis surely it; how oft extolled and harped
 By foreign bards, and we, unknowingly,
 Have ventured. [*Sinks in a reverie.*]

Vinnosa.

Cousin, rouse yourself. The sun—

Ursula. Most true! O hasten now, provision us.
 Sweet Martha's tact, Vinnosa's vigilance,
 Saula's prayer must shelter you. Go, go!
 I tarry here. Cordula, stay!

[*Exeunt Vinnosa, Saula, Martha and other maids.*]

Cordula.

Dear Princess!

Ursula. Dear loving one, run, gather flowers. My mood
 Demands your silence; I have a task—but there!
 Those bushes! see!

[*Konrad and Karl appear above the bushes.*]

Cordula. And trees that mimic men;
 Men-trees, tree-men. O happenings most strange.
 Princess fly! else vengeance come from source
 Unknown. O horrors! quick!

Ursula. We face, nor flinch;
 Though hell unburden. Two 'gainst two! our hearts
 Are pure.

Konrad. [*Advancing.*] Would ours did couple them; but
 no;

And truth that "no" doth ring with pleasures past.
 Supernal goddesses, give heed, for love
 Bemirrors here; who trespasses fair game—
 Or deity or mortal. Weave your spells,
 We better them and troth. if hearts be targets,
 Kisses touch the golden core: come, come,
 There is lip-avowal sweeter far than word:
 Why waste this sunny morn with wooing talk?

Ursula. Avaunt! vile fiend!

Konrad. [*Addressing Karl.*] Come friend, I give you her,
 The shrinking one; for me this Amazon,
 So stern and purposeful, and yet methinks
 That fires do lurk if we could search for them,
 Could strike some amorous spark! can beauty such
 Be strange to lover's plea? And I beseech
 With sighs and moans and all the dear conceits.
 Come, Goddess maid, I kneel.

Karl. And I more blunt
 Will sooner gain. [*Throwing his arm round Cordula.*]

Cordula. [*Repulsing him.*] O plight most desperate!
 Help! help!

[*Enter Lubin and Conon. Their swift approach startles Konrad and Karl who retire.*]

Lubin! O force of circumstance
 That is strange. Dream-shifts or fitful moods! are we
 Ourselves or where?

Lubin. [*Embracing her.*] Cordula, sweetheart.

Ursula.

Conon!

Conon. Princess! endangered now?—their blood—

Konrad. [*Addressing Karl.*]

Best off!

Last night's debauch unstrengthens us, and these
Are vengeful men.

Karl.

Then hasten!

Konrad. [*Making an attempt to get away.*] Too late! I
stumble.

Nathless good, would at those villains; willy,

Nilly. Hi! sobriety, have courage. [*Drawing on Conon.*]

Drunkenness doth plunge. Soho!

Conon. [*Defending himself.*] Your service.

[*Konrad fights with Conon and Karl with Lubin.*]

Konrad. Soho! swords clash; 'tis pretty play! uh! uh!

[*Falling.*]

Conon. You rascal-dog!

Konrad. I cry you mercy!

Karl. [*As he falls, addressing Lubin.*] And I!

Conon. [*Motioning them away.*] Another tale, so get you
gone.

Konrad.

A Frisian?

A brother?

Conon. That would crush your ruling face
Were he of such same stuff as you.

Ursula.

My Lord!

Lubin. They slink away like craven curs.

[*Exeunt Konrad and Karl.*]

Conon.

Let be!

If heaven is here, then hell is there: they share
The dark and we this dazzling privilege.

Ursula. O Prince, it seemed so clear the sailing, these
Few moments past and now comes turmoil, why?
And yet your presence here delivered us.
Why? O why? perplexity and doubt.

Cordula. And thankfulness, dear Princess. Lubin comes
And I be wishful of his presence; so you
Should welcome this most noble prince, God's choice
For you, long heralded.

Conon.
The truth.

Sweet maid, she speaks

Ursula. But winds, God-sent, have blown their strength
To sever us.

Conon. My presence here disproves;
I claim their friendliness. On foreign soil
Caught prisoners—a mission arduous—
How we bemoaned the taking! dull and cold
Our fate! To parry—we sought all means that wit
Incites,—incredible! our brides arriving,
And we—impatiently we sought the skies,
Turned livid now with answering flash and lo!
The winds came hissing, noised with freedom's cry.
They raged against our prison wall, till we
From wreckage crept, poor doubting mortals, lost
We knew not where; yet winds still succoured us.
They winged our heels and drew the briars apart,
And scattered boughs to bridge the loathsome fen.
So lovingly they timed our going, so shaped
Its course, that we, but shortly since, espied
Your maiden-friends, well happened on: how came
We there, how they, 'twas quickly said; exulting,

We hastened here, exulting still, for hark:
 The tuneful winds have blown love's blossom wide,
 Have strung impassioned lays, God's breath invokes
 Deliverance. He guards our marriage troth.

Ursula. Not so, I fear; there is a something tells
 Me that.

Conon. But "fear" bespeaks your love, come, come,
 My Ursula, admit.

Ursula. O wayward heart,
 Who knows its beat? Not I.—Celestial Hosts,
 I call! Discover! He comes, God's Messenger.

[*The Angel appears glowing through a cloudy haze.*]

Lubin. There is nothing.

Cordula. No—

Conon. I faintly see—

Cordula. [*Drawing Lubin back.*] Slip back,
 Lest we discourage, we, begrimed with earth.

Ursula. [*Clasping her hands.*] Glorious one! All hail!

Angel. Thine Angel-guide
 That hovers near and twice made visible.
 O favoured one! respond! once more I come, —
 With martyr-crown, God's highest gift; prepare!
 Go now on sacred pilgrimage, Rome calls,
 And thou hast news to blazon there: go forth,
 A prophet-maid, who preaches spirit-worlds;
 Nor dread the thorny path, fresh righteousness
 Discovering. Go forth, sweet Ursula,
 Thy maiden friends, a throng that presses nigh;

The frailest, most afeard, yet strong for thou,
Who rulest them, art steeped in grace; go forth
Nor tarry long. When thou returnest here,
Most cherished bride, the halo-blaze will flash
Its countless pricking jewels, go forth, prepare!

Conon. [*Throwing himself on the ground beside Ursula.*]

I kiss your robe, high-chosen one, will follow,
A humble gatherer of bread.

ST. URSULA

ACT IV.

Scene.—The interior of Attila's tent, near Cologne, shortly after his defeat by Aetius, at Chalons. Nearly six months have elapsed since Act III. The King lies on a cushioned couch beside a table on which are wooden dishes. Otherwise the furnishings are rich. A dwarf lies on the ground beside him.

Enter Onzel, who makes obeisance.

Onzel. Great, valiant king, he stands without, who swears
She is lovelier than semblance caught in dream.

Attila. Go have him fetched: did we not ask his presence?
Must we give orders twice?

Onzel. [*Opening the door-flap.*] Come Sir!

[*Enter Konrad struggling between two guards.*]

Konrad.
O torture me or prison me. I pray you,

No, no!

Spare me sight of this terrific Prince,
Who dartles death; whose glance will blind.

Dwarf.
The world soon rid of snivelling, unctuous fools.
Feast, man, feast, on this fair countenance.

Then were

Attila. Cease your prattle! Prisoner, speak out!
Nor be afraid. Great Attila withholds
His magic dart from those who favour him.
The truth uncover, nor more, nor less: this Princess—
Is she as bards have pictured her?

Konrad.

She is—

Attila. Speak out!

Konrad. A Goddess tuned to man's delight,
Yet far beyond his longing grasp. As well
Make jewels from sunset-glow or silver cloth
From those pale rays the moon bestrews.

Attila. A goddess?

Konrad. Ten—eleven thousand goddesses
Do clamour round and worship her. She is
Above all praise; that bright, illusive charm
That image-makers strive to chisel—fail,
Though search be made with prayerful heart.

h

Attila. A goddess?
I vision her, would feel her gentle touch,
Go fetch her, say: "Great Attila hath sent." [*Falls into a
revery.*]

Onzel. [*Making obeisance.*] All hail!

[*Exit.*]

Konrad. [*In a low voice.*] In goddess-flight she'll wing
 from him,
 Immure herself in heaven's keep. Though sober,
 No sottish fancy yet hath linked the dawn
 With midnight's grim, devouring black.

Dwarf. She'll come
 All wonderstruck and trembling, rich in arts
 That captivate, great Attila hath sent.

Konrad. [*Pushing past his guards and seizing him.*] Vile,
 mocking dwarf!

Dwarf. [*Struggling.*] Let loose—he strangles me.
 He dares.

Attila. [*Rousing himself.*] Who dares? when Attila is lost
 In thought.—The prisoner? Away with him!

Dwarf. A traitor! a foul assassin!

Attila. Let vultures fatten.

Konrad. I cry you pardon, gracious King, if flesh
 Be torn and mauled, where is its bravery?
 And mine hath oozed.

Attila. A cowardly fool! though troth
 His tongue much pleased us—a goddess—a goddess—
 She flashes freedom. Away with him! Our pardon.—
 Have we not said?

[*Exeunt Konrad and guards*]

but what is life that mocks
 The highest? fools though cling; we pity them;
 Ourselves among. [*He drinks.*] The goblet is raised, and lo!
 The fizzling draught is merged in sourish dreg.

Harsh, deriding fate! is Attila
 Its prey? but no a thousand times, and no,
 As many as our thousand slain. Defeat—
 Defeat and Attila!—Aetius smiles,
 As once, in boyish play, he rivalled me,
 A prince; whose birth had blazoned signs and wonders;
 Whose sword invokes what is worshipful, God-sent
 Supremacy! who dares to question? ours!
 By jugglery and truth. Aetius smiles:
 So be, our battle cry! we'll ram that smile
 Through Rome's vain, flinching heart until it shrinks,
 A lifeless thing; for blood, torrential streams
 Outpouring soon, will blur from minstrel song
 The cringing note of war's defeat: a slip—
 O woeful one—no more! We rise to heights
 Unventured; Great Attila, World-King!

Dwarf. [*Handing him a wooden dish, containing strips of raw meat.*]

Hath need, as lesser folk; this flesh awaits.
 'Tis newly killed and drips with moist.

But he

Attila. [*Eating neatly with his fingers.*]
 Our daily fare—shall men thus nurtured fear
 The soft and sleek that comes from sodden dough?
 Aetius smiles, we take his smile and rend it.
 Bread-eater, sallow face, rash Southerner,
 Who dares rebuke? as tasselled wheat that is teased
 And ground, we crush his eglet-pride. The Hun,
 The Ravisher, hath spoken.

A feast!

Dwarf.

Eat, my Lord.

Attila. Ay eat and drink, then drowse and dream; but not
 Of errors now, nor war's sepulchral power.
 We crave joy's dalliance, a fairer mood
 That is soothed with woman's touch, her cooing voice.

A queen! a wife!—and mine are dull, all steeped
 With that drear lethargy, all like as like;
 Each move, each glance—each cowering look, each strained,
 Coquettish smile: there is nought to choose.—Now ends
 Our gloom, our saddened thought.—A goddess comes:
 We cherish her, imperial one! whose strength
 Will 'vantage ours,—whose beauty, cheer; but hark!
 There is noise without. [*Unnoticing the gold jug and basin
 which the dwarf pushes toward him.*]

Dwarf. [*Opening the door-flap.*] She comes, or is't a slave
 With lagging step and sobered mien? a captive?
 A goddess? then she that scatters grief. Beware!

[*Enter Ursula between guards.*]

Attila. Let her approach—the Princess Ursula,
 The Queen of Hearts; whose glory gleams and pales
 The word that heralded, so much surpassing.
 The Queen of Hearts! of ours! and sweet her bearing;
 Modesty inwrought with pride, assumption,
 Who hath like? 'Tis dazzlement and power,—
 And power! all worship it.

Ursula. If gained from God!
 I come, but most unwillingly, would know
 Your purpose.

Attila. First to question yours, a princess
 Court-nurtured, thus to dare the mazy woods,
 Where beasts and robbers lurk.

Ursula. God's word delivers.
 We fear His creatures not.—In Rome we tarried
 Some thrifty moons and sipped her draughts of wisdom.
 Favoured thus, heart-strengthened, our journey's end
 Is nigh, home beckons us.

Attila.

And home, what is't?

A wanderer's tent, a log-piled resting-place?
Or is't the music of a woman's voice,
Her close and tender presence? Ursula,
Sweet maid from Britain's soil, we humbly crave.
Will raise to dizzy height who pleasures us.
This small, white hand so pure, so lily-like;
A tyrant's wand, will move and threaten empires,
Moving us. We dower with priceless wealth
And jeweled crowns.

Ursula. [*Pushing him off.*] And bloody stain.*Attila.*

Most true!

We had forgot, whose pride is cleanliness.
The dwarf shall suffer though.

Dwarf.

O pity me,

I pushed the bowl and napkin's fold: your eyes
Great King, were elsewhere. [*Offering the bowl.*]

Attila. [*Washing his hands.*] The fault is hers;

But as the moon, whose beams beget strange notions,
Lunacy and lover's vows.

Ursula.

I pray you

Let me go nor press this nonsense further.

Attila. Nonsense? why 'tis earnestness that touches
Deep within. You shrink from me, as from
Some monster, fabulous and drear. If songs
Be sung by foreign bards, they slay my goodness,
Preach the bad and I'm of both, distribute
Both as Nimrod, my great ancestor,
As lesser ones in lesser ways. All things
Are bound in me; for listen, Ursula,
Great deeds substantial grow from youthful craving.

In boyish dream, within my kinsman's tent,
 My thoughts went drifting once, potential stir!
 I'd serve the Christian's god, unroll his books,
 Delve deep in alchemy and stars; subscribe
 Myself Christ's follower; so win and keep
 My captaincy, as learned monk, as Saint
 Hereafter: thus I mused; but earthwards came;
 Kutka, the Hunnic God, delivered me.
 Hark how! A sudden rush, a greenish cat
 Had sprung and pawed beside our booty-pile:
 He tossed Byzantium's golden globe, her sign
 Of pomp and vast imperial power: a voice
 Then whispered me, "so wilt thou play, earth's monarch,
 With peoples and their destinies." I took
 My sword and pointed North and South and East
 And West: Great Attila was born that day.

Ursula. O fearsome Lord, I pity you!

Attila.

You pity!

Offending me, offending God; who gives
 And takes, awarding prize and punishment.
 What is't you worship? power! power!—the power
 Of God!—and mine responds.

Ursula.

O heavenly Ones,
 Protect and save whose ears have listened thus!

[*Tumult without.*]

Conon's voice. Stand by! I claim a prince's right, a lover's:
 "A feline claw" well passed the guards, twice said
 It passes here. Give way, I pray you.

Attila.

Who dares?

Ursula. My Conon's voice!

Dwarf. [*Addressing Attila.*] Your clemency disclosed

The sign, the fool but late escaped hath babbled.
Another comes.

[*Enter Conon, Onzel, Guards and Archers.*]

Attila. Who dares intrude?

Conon. Who dares
The devil's self to die with her—or save.

Attila. Then die a dastard's death. Quick archers, guards.
Assassin back!

Conon. [*Pushing past the guards.*] Give way! I challenge
him.

He cowers—have faith, great Attila! So test
Your godly birth, your sword's bright deity.
A simple man now hurls defiance; can fires
Not blister? He shrinks away; can gibes not hearten?
Can taunts not blow some valour?

Attila. Cursed one!
Go, capture him—ay strangle.

Conon. [*As the guards seize him.*] Great Attila!

Ursula. Conon, cease, nor strew with mocking words
This last lament I grievously must watch.

Attila. Princess,—a buzzing gnat, no more.—We spare
His paltry life, so give us yours, a thing
Of consequence, of merit.

Ursula. That merits then
A martyr's death; strike! Attila!—I wait.

Attila. You gazed on him, thus gaze on me, the world,
His life, your maidens' joy; all, all, are yours.

Ursula. 'Twould perish me, go throttle him, then cast
Your darts, let maidens cry: "eternity."
I loathe and shrink, so now let vengeance play.
Give lie to earth and truth to God's hereafter.
May Heaven protect and strengthen me, give grace
To him, whose fading thought indwells with me,
To waken bathed in radiance. Have cheer,
I watch, dear Conon, mine eyes do gather yours.

Conon. [*Gasping.*] Dear heart, come nearer, near—
[*The guards strangle him.*]

Ursula. He is dead—my love
Now struggles through, it reaches him; he feels,
He smiles.—Push back my tears, I follow.—Strike,
Vile tyrant, strike!

Attila. [*Enraged.*] To dumbness—archers, quick!
Let arrows pierce.

[*The Archers draw on Ursula.*]

Ursula. [*Falling against a bench.*] 'Tis pain, its mystery,
Its proud acclaim! for see these purplish drops,
The sacrificial tint, God treasures them—
The Heavenly Spouse hath called, my garment is stained
With royal dye, most precious colouring.
'Tis martyr-blood, all undeserved, yet mine.
It trickles, pools—God's vessel I, that is spilt
For Him—adoring! [*Dies.*]

Attila. Ursula!—dead—dead—
Thrust back the flashing minutes, steady them.
To hold and capture her with sweet endearment.
Gone—a mockery of all I wished,
Bedevilment and wrath! The veiling grey
My hand hath pulled—shall I demur? but no,
I wrap its fold these thousand times submerging.

Let tempests crash and woes augment [*Raising his goblet.*]

We drink

To them, deep draughts of folly's wine: all hail
The rumbling clouds, the moaning wind's dull bleat.
The moon eclipses now—poor moon—the stars
Though glint while she, their queen, lies lustreless.
Extinguish them; blow, blow each errant lamp,
Let arrows whirr, then deafening din, then still;
Still; still— [*Falling in a drunken slumber.*]

Onzel. And very still, a heavy still
That staggers us and holds —those remnants there
Of once such winsome charm—such manliness.
Himself as seeming dead, what was it he said,
Our gracious King? Come dwarf, no fool, unravel.

Dwarf. Then Archers, quick! go gather strength, assemble!
Eleven thousand wails; go howl them down—
Our bravest.

Attila. [*Rousing himself.*] My brain is cleared, though
sparkles dance.
Why stand you there, like statues, mouths agape?
Go massacre, not one shall 'scape of those
Audacious maids; so down with tenderness
And soft allure and woman's wile; the man—
The warrior—will crush and trample!—Loot and wine
And harsh and grim endeavour, ascendancy—
And power!

Cordula.

Then hold

Me close—let doubting whisper go, press warmth,
Press cold and bleak forgetfulness.

Scene III.—The same as Act III., Scene II: again it is early dawn. There are signs of fray. Dead bodies are strewn about. Among others Saula's.

Enter Cordula.

Cordula. I could not sleep, impossible; those sights,
Those sounds; I am of them; they beckoned me.
And here my friends are strewn: they sleep, not I,
And Lubin sleeps, I slipped from him and I,
Alone of all those shining multitudes,
Do trespass here, a sad and cowering thing.
What is this? Saula! once beloved by me.
I shrink, afraid. O hush yon bird that lilt
Unthinkingly,—the dawn that pushes rose
And gold where I would see grim-visaged night,
The stir that echoes all those yestermorns,
Dares echo them, when grief holds sway. Saula!
Speak! [*Sinks on the ground beside her body.*] Some waking
words! for freaky nightmare
Rends and tortures me. Distrustful though,
I'll ease a passage through its knotty web.
Saula, help, for daylight streams without,
Not this intrusive glare, that delves for stain
'Neath matted grass; but strong all-powerful light
That dwindles ill to nothingness. Saula!
Speak! give comfort!

[*Enter Onzel with attendant.*]

Onzel. [*In a low tone, pointing to Cordula.*] Back! step
softly, friend,

Nor question more, lest turning, she burden us
 With wide-distressful eyes. Like slaughtered lambs
 They fell, their piteous bleat resounding still,
 And that last hero-song that bravely rose:
 So die the valiant! so died those innocents.
 A loathly deed; yet breathe it not, and here is
 A worse, nor done with frenzy's urge. [*Stabbing Cordula.*] A
 cold
 And sudden stab—quite dead. The story is told:
 Come friend, away! may Attila rejoice!

[*Exeunt Onzel and Attendant.*]

Cordula. I felt their presence, would not turn to beg,
 To supplicate—I suffer though.

[*Enter Lubin.*]

Lubin.

Cordula!

So gasped her name will scarcely reach beyond
 These charnel-mounds. Dead, dead—all dead—the beat
 And muffled trumpetings of woe—where is
 The maid? evanished then?—no, no! *Cordula!*
Cordula! Dread seals my lips, it dries the moist.
 I shudder!—but love must torture through, must wing
 To her, *Cordula!* ay, the winds do carry;
 There comes a rustling sound.

Cordula.

Lubin! here!

Nor make outcry, nor sad complaint; for God
 Now strengthens me, the little flower, that slipped
 His grasp, when other, fairer blooms were culled.

Lubin. *Cordula*—dying—impossible: is God
 So cruel? No, no, it cannot be—she falters—
 She weakens—and who would dare? who could? my love
 Will challenge death! [*Taking her in his arms.*] It gathers her
 and holds.

Cordula. And nothing helps but martyred self, so taught
Our saintly Ursula; but I, more frail—
Cordula, little heart, revoking love,
Yet treasure it. [*Gazing at him, then suddenly pointing up-*
ward.] There! there!

[*Lubin turns but evidently sees nothing; Cordula, with hands clasped gazes enraptured. Maidens, garlanded with lilies and white roses and carrying palms, very faintly appear, in the background, passing above.*]

Voices. [*Scarcely audible till the last word.*]

Winging of maidens in garments of white,
Loosed from earth-sorrow, its din and its blight,
Upward and upward assailing the height,
Till wonders unfold.

Downward God sendeth His missiles of light,
Gleams of His glory and glimpses of might,
Downward and downward till visions incite,
And seekers behold!

[*A lily falls from above.*]

Cordula. [*Holding up the lily, ecstatically.*] Ursula!

[*The maidens fade away and Ursula, garlanded as they, is seen above approaching the radiant Angel; who lovingly touches her brow. A circle of light appears around her head. She looks down with wonderful sweetness. Cordula smiles back, exclaiming faintly.*] Ursula!

Lubin. [*Who sees nothing but Cordula dying.*] So ends
It all.

Cordula. [*Weakly pointing.*] See, See!

[*Lubin looks up. The vision fades as the mounting sun emerges from a cloud and dazzles with its brilliancy.*]

Keep 83
JBR

Date Due

74011

In a Venetian Garden
and
St. Ursula.

FRASER HICKSON INSTITUTE



F 117

7R2

March

Estimate 10th Lady Diamond

